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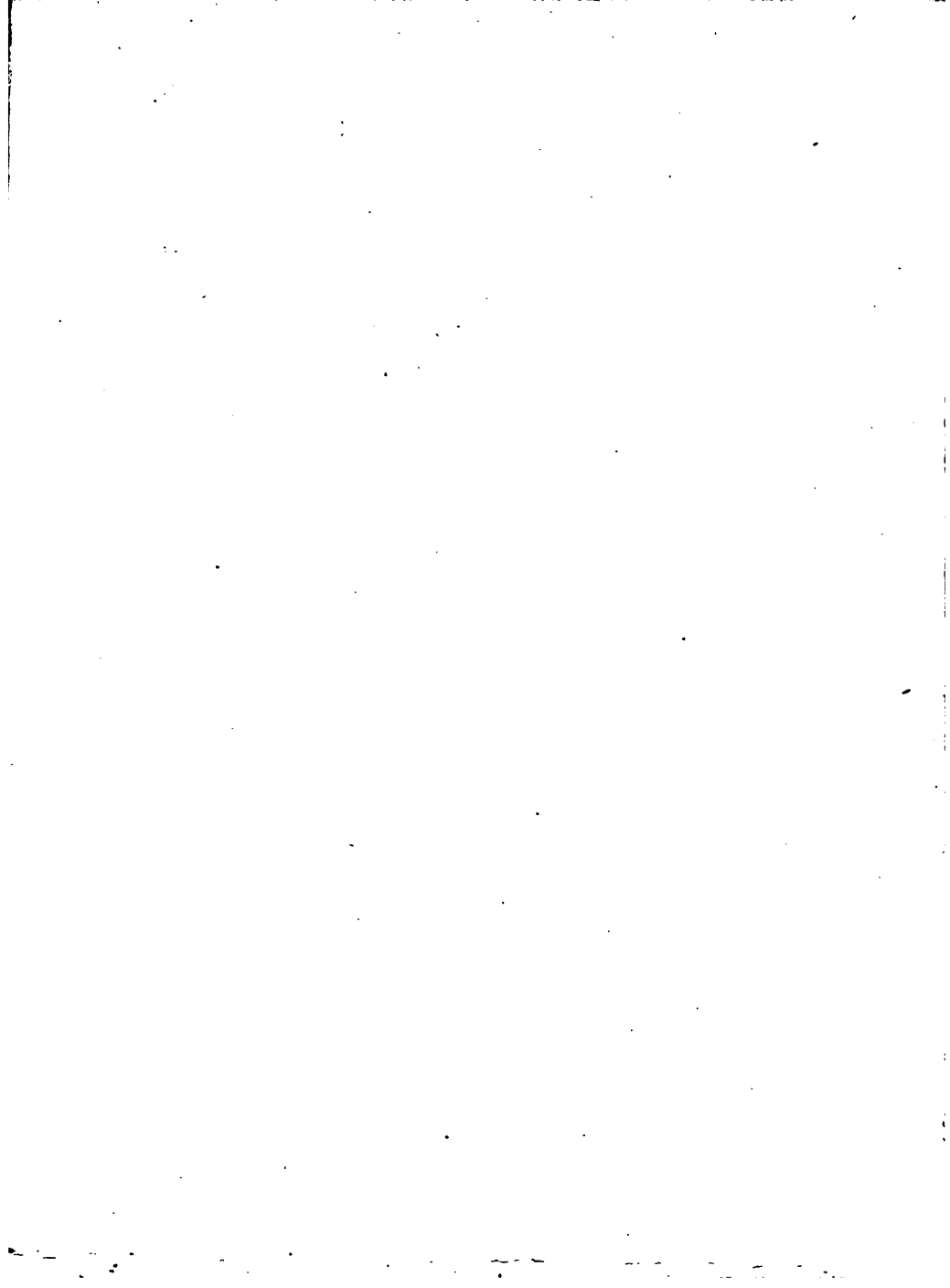
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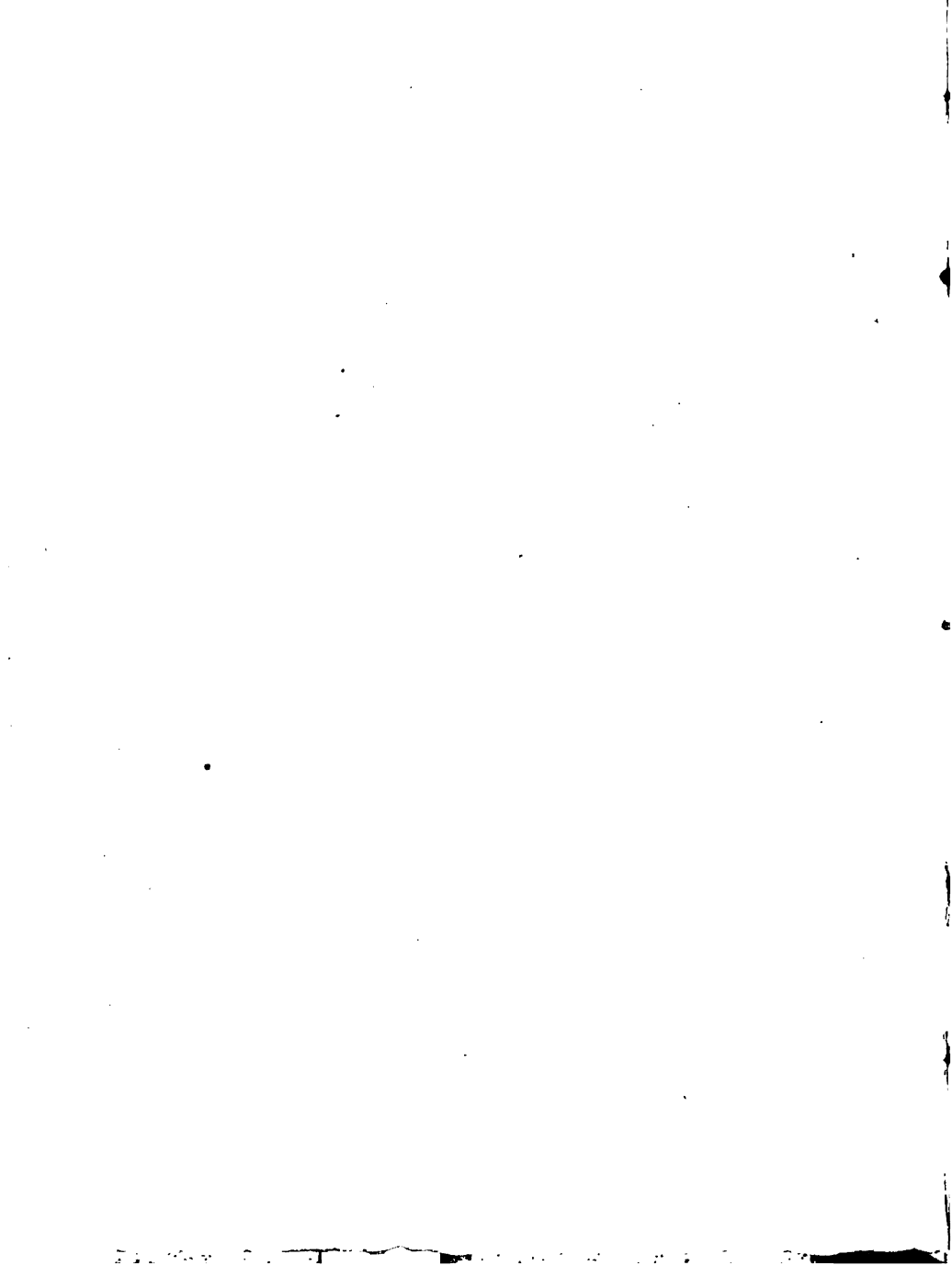






SONGS WITHOUT MUSIC.





SONGS WITHOUT MUSIC

RHYMES AND RECITATIONS

BY

HAMILTON AÏDÉ

SECOND EDITION



LONDON

DAVID BOGUE, 3, ST. MARTIN'S PLACE

TRAFALGAR SQUARE, W.C.

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Don
1882

MOST of the verses collected in this volume have been printed at various times, and in sundry ways, during the last twenty years. About one-third of the songs are new. The rest have been published with music; and, of these, many have become popular.

This is my excuse for gathering together lyrics, the chief merit of which is that they are more *singable* than perhaps better poetry sometimes is; and that they have been loved, and sung by lips that will sing no more.

Of the recitations, it is enough to say that they are not meant to be read *in silence*. They were written with a special intention, and demand the interpretation of the human voice. Most of the other poems appeared many years ago in a volume which is now out of print.

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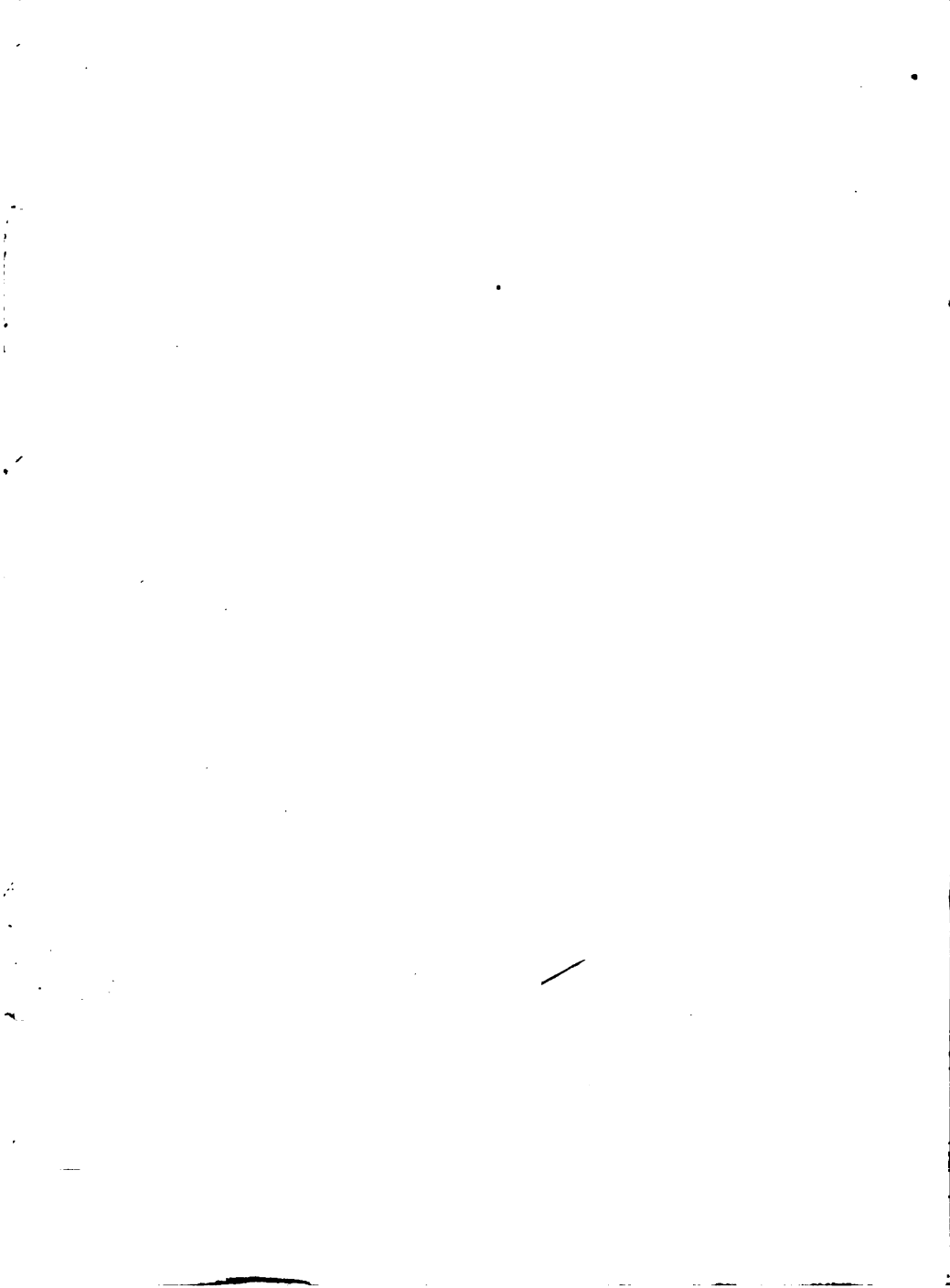
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SONGS WITHOUT MUSIC.

B



LOVED AND LOST.

I TOOK a lute that was shattered,
And tried to make music true ;
I took the leaves that were scattered,
And tried to make roses new.
I took up a vase that was broken,
And tried to fill it again;
I took up my first love-token,
And tried to re-forged the chain.
But the high, pure trust that I gave you,
What art in this world can restore?
I would give up my life to save you,—
But faith can return no more.

1880.



"WOULD THAT LOVE."

I.

WOULD that Love would bear my love
 In his arms away,
 To some green and pleasant place
 Far from heat of day,
 And that ever, in that shade,
 At her feet I lay !

II.

Would that Love would bear my love
 Far from world's desire,
 Far from thirst of gold, whose flame
 Scorcheth worse than fire,—
 Mounting on his wide-spread wings
 Higher, ever higher !

III.

Would that Love would bear my love
 To that perfect land,
 Where no other throne than his
 Can enduring stand !
 Love and I would live there happy
 Claspings hand in hand.

SOLDIERS' SONG.

I.

WE marched, at morning, through the streets,
A thousand men, and more ;
The birds sang not so blithe as we,
Along the river shore.
We were marching away,
With hope and courage high,
For honour and for Fatherland,
To conquer or to die.

II.

We marched at noon across the plain,
With hearts undaunted still,
Though, twice our force, the foeman stood
Against us on the hill.
We were marching away—
With hope and courage high,
For honour and for Fatherland
To conquer or to die.

III.

We homeward marched at night-time—
A hundred men—no more—
And with the shouts of victory, rose
A wailing by the shore.—
Of those who'd marched away
Nine hundred men were slain,
But for honour and for Fatherland,
We'd do the same again !

A NILE-SONG.

I.

I SAT with my Egyptian maid,
Down by the river, in the shade :
The red moon, with her half-shut eye,
Upon the glassy stream, hard by,
Among the lotus-flowers played
Dreamily.

II.

Through her dark hair, I wound the slips
Of lotus, with my finger-tips.
Gold earrings tinkled on my breast,
Our kisses kept the silence best,
Love laid his finger on our lips,
Dreamily.



A FRAGMENT—FOR MUSIC.

*The musician is alone at night. He opens his lattice,
and soliloquises in the star-light.*

WE call night peaceful ; yet, how fiercely burn
The myriad stars above ! Are *they* at peace,
Amid the war of winds, the crash of clouds ?
I think that, rather, could we hear the burthen
Of their great chorus, 'twould be unfulfilled
Desire, expectancy, unrest. To me
Heaven's harmonies are complicate as life . . .
Of which we have not the solution yet.

He takes up his lute and striking a few chords, sings.

I.

O unknown worlds above !
What fiery hate and love
Flash from your eyes, like passionate human tears !
Shall all our bitter strife,
When we have done with life,
Be expiated in your burning spheres ?

II.

Shall we, poor spirits, wander
In purgatory yonder,
Waiting for that yet-unseen isle of peace,
When, cleansed from sin and stainless,
We shall be wafted painless
To the great End, where tribulations cease?

III.

Stars lying in God's hand,
We know ye were not planned
Merely to light men on their midnight way.
Shine on, ye fiery stars !
It may be, through your bars
We shall pass upwards, to Eternal Day.

1881.



WINTER IS PAST.

WINTER is past, Love ; again the stream flows :
We two are met who have sorrowed apart ;
For each thorn of winter, we'll pluck a spring-rose,
Life of my life, my Love, Heart of my heart !

Spring-time rejoicing, the little birds burn
Crimson with love in the arms of the woods ;
Night hath been long, but now day will return,
Wealth of my wealth, my Love, Best of my Goods !

Birds sing already, as though it were June,
Sorrow and snows are both melted away :
Lift up thy voice—let us sing the same tune,
Life of my life, my Love, Queen of my May !



SHEPHERD OF ISRAEL.

I.

SHEPHERD of Israel, watching thy fold at night,
 Up on the hills, over deep Galilee,
 Thou never slumberest, Thou hast beheld thy flock
 Breaking away from the fold, and from Thee.
 Little they reck of the perils before them ;
 Down by that slippery path to the deep—
 Lift up thy voice in the darkness, and call to them,
 Thou who hast laid down Thy life for the sheep !

II.

Shepherd of Israel, follow those wanderers,
 Take back the little lambs home in Thine arms ;
 Pity the stubborn ones, torn in the brambles,
 Show them their error, and soothe their alarms.
 Each one has fancied his way was the right one—
 —Madly possessed, down that precipice steep
 Let them not rush, like the swine, to destruction,
 Thou who hast laid down Thy life for the sheep !

III.

Shepherd of Israel, haste to deliver them ;
 Dawn is now breaking o'er deep Galilee ;
 Darkness deluded them, day will discover them
 Far from their fold on the mountain, and Thee.
 Is not that fold very broad, if they knew it . . ?
 Made to encompass the strong and the small ?
 Oh, lead them home, with Thy voice to those pastures,
 Thou who hast laid down Thy life for them all !

SLEEP.

IN the still time of sleep
 I dream of thee ;
 Like stars, so far, so bright,
 Thine eyes shine through the night
 Adown, on me.

The voices of my sleep
 Out-sing all birds ;
 Breathing continuous streams
 Of music in my dreams,—
 Thy parting words !

There entereth in that world
 Nor grief, nor ill :
 I hold thee to my heart ;
 Thou can'st not then depart,
 But lie there still.

From the deep peace of sleep
 At morn I rise,
 For thee to toil and fight,
 Then sheathe the sword at night,
 And close my eyes.

DESOLATION.

WINTERY day, cold and grey,
As my heart in this chill place;
Will no wind, blithe and kind,
Waft a smile into thy face?

Drops of rain, like dull pain,
Throb upon the heavy air,
Growing thick, beating quick,
With the pulse of a despair.

All about,—within, without,
Creeps the blank and cheerless grey :
O for One, like the sun,
Who should drive these clouds away!



A WALK AND A WORD.

DO you recall our woodland walk,
After the passing showers of rain ?
The soft sand underneath our tread,
The wind that shook the boughs o'erhead,
And brought a moment's shower again ?

The whisper'd secrets of the leaves,—
The silent listening air below,—
The cheerful voice of some far bird,
High up among the branches heard,—
The little stream's untiring flow ? . . .

Do you recall some transient words
That sank deep in my heart that day ?
We count the Past with words like these,
As circles mark the growth of trees,
Which time can never wear away.



WESTERN WINDS.

I.

BLOW, western winds, around my father's door;
 Blow softly : snap not the o'erladen stalks :
 Drift the red leaf through casements to the floor ;
 And warmly whistle down the laurel walks.

II.

Blow as that evening when I last beheld
 The elm trees answer to your rustling call,—
 The apron flutter which my Phillis held,
 Shaking the peaches from the garden wall.

III.

Blow round the memory of my home and her,—
 The budding passions of our June and May,—
 O richer far than frankincense or myrrh,
 Remains the odour of its new-mown hay.



OH, LET ME DREAM.¹

OH ! let me dream of happy days gone by,
 Forgetting sorrows that have come between,
 As sunlight gilds some distant summit high,
 And leaves the valleys dark that intervene.
 The phantoms of remorse that haunt
 The soul, are laid beneath that spell ;
 As, in the music of a chaunt
 Is lost the tolling of a bell.
 Oh ! let me dream of happy days gone by, &c.

In youth, we plucked full many a flower that died,
 Dropped on the pathway, as we danced along ;
 And now, we cherish each poor leaflet dried
 In pages which to that dear past belong.
 With sad crushed hearts they yet retain
 Some semblance of their glories fled ;
 Like us, whose lineaments remain,
 When all the fires of life are dead.
 Oh ! let me dream, &c.

¹ From "A Nine Days' Wonder."



BROWN EYES OR BLUE EYES.

I.

BROWN eyes, or blue eyes, hazel or grey,
 What are the eyes that I drink to, to-day?
 Some seem to mock at us, some seem to frown—
 Some, when we talk, cast their drooping lids down.
 No matter their colour, I drink to the eyes
 That weep when I weep, when I laugh laugh replies!

II.

Merry or scornful, angry or kind,
 I love every mood, so the eyes be not blind!
 For man's mood is changeful, and what should he do,
 If woman's, in sympathy, did not change too?
 No matter their colour, I drink to the eyes
 That weep when I weep, when I laugh laugh replies!

III.

Brown eyes, or grey eyes, hazel or blue,
 We watch for them, live for them, die for them, too!
 Stars of our morning, sunbeams through life,
 Beacons in darkness, and danger, and strife.
 No matter their colour, I drink to the eyes
 That weep when I weep, when I laugh laugh replies! 10

SPANISH BOAT SONG.¹

I.

O H, pleasant 'tis, when morn looks grey
 On the river sea-ward creeping,
 To lie and float in a little boat,
 And watch the fishes leaping.
 Hoai ! hoai ! the boatmen cry,
 As they drag the gleaming river,
 Our net is long, our arms are strong,
 Our boat's on the Guadalquiver !
 Andalusia ! Andalusia !
 What land so fair
 That can compare
 With Andalusia !

II.

And pleasant 'tis, when evening calls
 To the west wind over the water,
 To serenade a dark-eyed maid,
 With the song my lips have taught her.
 Hoai ! hoai ! the boatmen cry,
 As they pull up the golden river,
 The sun's in the west, we'll hie to rest,
 On the banks of the Guadalquiver !
 Andalusia, &c.

¹ From "Philip."

III.

But best it is to know, when all
The world is calmly sleeping,
Her watch for me, by the citron-tree,
My dark-eyed maid is keeping.
Hoai ! hoai ! that boatman's cry,
She will never forget it, never !—
When heard, that strain will recall again
Old days by the Guadalquivir.
Andalusia, &c.



THE LINDEN WALTZ.

I.

THE old waltz by the linden trees
 Is wafted on the evening breeze.
 How many memories it brings
 Of long-departed things !
 I see the blind old fiddler stand
 Among the merry, youthful band :
 I watch them dance ; before mine eyes
 Again the joyous groups arise.
 Floating with pleasure,
 Unto that measure,
 While the day's azure
 Grows purple and gold.
 Dear little couples make
 Merry beside the lake,
 And with their laughter wake
 Echoes untold !
 The old waltz, &c.

II.

The dancers 'neath those linden trees
 Are severed now by land and seas :
 And nothing of the past remains,
 Except those joyous strains !
 Blithe-hearted then, in youth's gay spring,
 Like birds from branch to branch that sing,

We build us nests in fancy, high
Above the world, and near the sky !
Dance on for ever !
In my dreams never
Shall aught dis sever
 The groups that arise ;
Ere future sorrow
Bade the heart borrow
Care from to-morrow
 To dim our eyes.
 The old waltz, &c.



THE CHOICE.

I.

WOULD'ST thou rather have a kingdom, and a
 castle by the sea,
 Far from all that thou hast cared for, far from all who
 care for thee,
 Than see at night the eyes thou lov'st, smile by a cottage
 fire,
 And know thyself enthronèd there, the Queen of his
 desire ?

II.

Would'st thou wear a brodered garment, with a
 golden ring and crown,
 And no warm human love to stir the heart beneath
 the gown,
 Or feel it beating with the pulse o' the purest joy here
 known,
 Beneath a russet kirtle, and a wedding-ring thine own ?

III.

It is thine to choose thy bird to-day, the eagle or the
 dove—
 The broad wing of ambition, or the lowly flight of
 love :
 It is thine to choose thy lot to-day ; consider thy reply.—
 The Angels will record thy words through all eternity !

CHLOE.¹

CHLOE sat beside the river,
 Sighing to the murmuring reeds,
 "Love has wander'd off for ever,
 Far, and farther he recedes!"
 Maidens, weep for poor young Chloe!
 Scorned she Love, when blithe and gay:
 Vengeful Cupid heard her; so he
 Punishes the Maid to-day.

Chloe was beloved by Damon,
 Straight and proud she bore her head,
 Now the tree he carved her name on
 Bears another name instead!
 Maidens, weep for poor young Chloe!
 She, who will not when she may,
 Angers vengeful Cupid; so he
 Punishes the maid to-day!

¹ From "Widows Bewitched."



IN AUTUMN.

I WALK'D beneath the branches tall,
 Where we were wont to meet :
 Alone, I saw the red leaves fall
 In silence at my feet.
 But barest bough the April hours
 Make glad with joys of Spring,—
 Only to hearts bereaved no show'rs
 The leaves again can bring.

I hear his voice, his very words,—
 His musical 'good-day,'
 Out-singing all the song of birds,
 And waters on their way.
 And yet I know beneath his feet,
 The bracken will not bend,
 And, face to face, we shall not meet,
 Till sorrow here shall end !



DANCE ON, MAIDEN.

DANCE on, Maiden, high up on the hill,
Fresh as at daybreak, unwearying still ;
Dimpling the grass with thy dainty feet,
As the wave is rippled by seagulls fleet.
What a spirit there is in those proud young arms
Tossing the hair back that shadows thy charms !
—The only shadow across thy brow.
O would I could dance as light-hearted as thou !

Dance on, Maiden, for who can say
Thou ever wilt dance—as thou dost to-day ?
Thy cithern may break, or thy heart may discover
A tune it loves better—the voice of a lover !
But now thou know'st nothing of passion or sorrow,
Thy heart's in thy feet—will it be there to-morrow ?
Then dance while it beats to that light measure now.
O would I could dance as light-hearted as thou !



SONGS OF MOTHER AND FATHER.

I.

BABE, GOOD-NIGHT.

I.

BABE, good-night ! and with the flowers
 Close thine eyes to earthly things,
 Heav'n, where thou so lately dwelled'st,
 Wide each golden window flings.

II.

Through the gate thou passest boldly,
 Which we should approach with fear :
 In that seraph-world, it may be,
 Thou art more at home than here.

III.

Dost thou join the angel-choir ? . . .
 Meet thy playmates in the sky ?
 Do we seem to thee but shadows—
 Shadows of the things on high ?

IV.

Howsoe'er it may be, darling,
 Dream until the dawn of blue ;
 Like a rose thy thoughts are folded,
 They shall wake refresh'd with dew.

II.

BABY'S GROWTH.

BABY, mine no longer,
Shooting straight and tall,
Growing hourly stronger,
Scorning now to crawl,
With the help of mother's finger,
Or along the wall ;

Soon will mother's boy, Baby,
Heed her not, they say ;
But like a broken toy, Baby,
Cast her not away.
Ever think of her as something
Useful in its day.

Little rosy fingers
Claspt round mother's throat,
How their touch still lingers,
And the first sweet note
Of thy voice, that on the darken'd
Silent room did float !

In my open palm, child,
Stood two tiny shoes ;
Almost doth my arm, child,
Now thy weight refuse.
Every day some portion of thee,
Growing large, I lose.

Thou must climb the hill-top,
Be it bare or green—
Both the good and ill crop ;
Learn to choose between,—
While with folded hands in prayer
At the foot I lean.

Man's ignorance they say, child,
Is not his innocence,
And thou must fight thy way, child,
Onward, upward hence,
Through a world where mother's arm
Is helpless for defence.

Knowledge will be bought there,
But something must thou lose,
And O ! a loving thought ne'er
To those days refuse,
When thy mother's open palm
Held those tiny shoes !



III.

FATHER'S LULLABY.

LIE at peace, my little one,
 Let no fears alarm thee,
 Lie at rest on Father's breast,
 Nothing there shall harm thee ;
 Mother to her home is gone,
 To her home beyond the sea ;
 She hath left me here alone,
 Baby, with no nurse but me.
 Hush ! Lie still my little one !

Though my voice, O little one,
 Knows no soothing measure,
 Yet my arm can shield from harm
 Mother's parting treasure.
 Till we there together meet
 In that home beyond the sea,
 Something she hath left me, Sweet,
 Baby still remains with me.
 Hush ! Lie still my little one !



IV.

THE PICTURE BOOK.

I.

A CHILD look'd up to his father's smile ;
 " What do the pictures say ?"
 " If my little boy will listen awhile,
 A meaning all have they.
 This is a soldier, stout and bold,
 With his scarlet coat, all laced with gold :
 He will never desert his colours, and fly.—
 Will my boy be a soldier, by-and-by ?"

II.

" This is a sailor, honest and brave,
 Whose home is the mighty sea ;
 He has left his cottage to breast the wave,
 For the good of you and me.
 Nursed in the dangers of the deep,
 Rock'd by the winds and waves to sleep,
 Climbing the masts that are up in the sky,—
 Will my boy be a sailor, by-and-by ?"

III.

" This is the shepherd, faithful and true,
 Watching over his flock ;
 You may hear his pipe the long day through,
 Ringing from rock to rock.

He bears the small lambs home on his back,
And leadeth those who have lost the track
Safe to their fold, 'neath the starry sky.—
Will my boy be a shepherd, by-and-by?"

IV.

"Who is this, with the great white wings?"—
"This is the Angel mild,
Yet strong to fight, who brings holy things
To the heart of my little child.
He once was a Child himself, like you,
Striving his Father's will to do.
God gave him wings, and he soar'd on high. . . .
Will my boy be an Angel, by-and-by?"

June, 1877.



HOME ACROSS THE QUIET MEADOWS.

I.

HOME across the quiet meadows,
 Shines a light through evening shadows,
 Bright as wand of fairy ;
 Leads me to the home I long for,
 Which my heart beats ever strong for ;
 Leads me to the home I long for,
 Home again to Mary.
 Hark ! the tinkling flocks before me !
 And the shepherd's pipe comes o'er me,
 Ringing through the wild-wood.
 On the sky's brow, smoothed from wrinkles
 Furrowed by Day's cares, Night sprinkles
 Here and there, a star that twinkles,
 Like the eyes of Childhood.
 Home across the quiet meadows,
 Shines a light through evening shadows,
 Bright as wand of fairy ;
 Leads me to the home I long for,
 Which my heart beats ever strong for ;
 Leads me to the home I long for,
 Home again to Mary !



ALONE ON THE SHORE.

I.

I STOOD on the cold grey rock that looks out on
 the hungry sea,
 And the waves that were boiling below my feet bore
 my true love away from me.
 Oh, how often since then, have waves and waters
 striven,
 And unto the sea, at sunset time, the peace of God
 been given !
 But thou, O thou, my Love ! no more—no more
 return'st to me,
 And I sit alone on the desolate shore, and list to the
 surging sea.

II.

An image of mortal life are the waves around me
 vext ;
 Ebbing one hour with strife, flowing with joy the
 next.
 Some crafts they wreck for ever, cast some upon the
 beach,
 Where happy sunsets bring them peace the world
 can never reach.
 But thou, O thou, my Love ! no more—no more
 return'st to me,
 And I sit alone on the desolate shore, and list to the
 surging sea.

REMEMBER OR FORGET.

I.

I SAT beside the streamlet,
 I watch'd the water flow,
 As we together watch'd it
 One little year ago ;
 The soft rain pattered on the leaves,
 The April grass was wet.
 Ah ! folly to remember ;—
 'Tis wiser to forget.

II.

The nightingales made vocal
 June's palace paved with gold ;
 I watched the rose you gave me
 Its warm red heart unfold ;
 But breath of rose and bird's song
 Were fraught with wild regret.
 'Tis madness to remember ;
 'Twere wisdom to forget.

III.

I stood among the gold corn,
 Alas ! no more, I knew,
 To gather gleaner's measure
 Of the love that fell from you.
 For me, no gracious harvest—
 Would God we ne'er had met !
 Tis hard, Love, to remember, but
 'Tis harder to forget.

IV.

The streamlet now is frozen,
The nightingales are fled,
The cornfields are deserted,
And every rose is dead.
I sit beside my lonely fire,
And pray for wisdom yet—
For calmness to remember,
Or courage to forget.



THE MAID I LOVE.

I.

I LOVE a maid whose eyes are blue,
Who never walks but runs,
Whose voice is shrilly-clear and who
Is very fond of buns.
You'll not be shocked if you behold
Her seated on my knee,—
The maid I love is six years old,
And I am thirty-three!

II.

She thinks I'm very old, I know,
She treats me like her slave,
She laughs in mockery when I show
Her how she should behave.
She pulls my whiskers when I scold,
And dances round in glee—
But then—she's only six years old,
And I am thirty-three!

III.

I fear she's rather fickle, too,
She has a score of "flames,"—
She makes them tell her tales untrue,
And play at noisy games.

In search of crumbs, like robin bold,
She hops from knee to knee—
But then, she's only six years old,
And I am thirty-three !

IV.

And when my back is bent with years,
And I no longer sing,
And she hath known the cares and tears
That life must surely bring,
I know her loving heart will hold
A tender thought of me,
In days when she was six years old,
And I was thirty-three !



JENNY IN THE ORCHARD.

TWAS in an orchard that I met my Jenny long ago;
 The apples were not half so red as were her
 cheeks, I trow,

The sunlight through the boughs made sport upon her
 golden hair,
 For hide and seek it found no place within a mile as
 fair.

She smiled on me : I whispered low, "My Jenny, I
 perceive
 That Eden was an orchard, and you resemble Eve !"

She plucked an apple from the bough, and laughing
 gave it me.

"Take it, for apples are not here forbidden fruit, you
 see."

As she reached up, I stole my arm around her waist
 and sighed—

"The fruit I crave is Jenny's love, and that's to me
 denied !"

She blushed. "Ah ! serpent-like your arm winds
 round my waist, 'tis true

The Tempter in the orchard was not so bold as you !"

I wooed her all the winter long, I won her in the May ;
 The apple-blossoms strewed Love's path upon our
 wedding day ;

And now, though many a one is dead, my Jenny,
silver-hair'd,
Still sits beneath the apple-tree that fifty springs have
spared.
With children's hands to guide our steps, we totter
down the steep,
Till both, within that orchard, at last shall fall asleep.



THE MAID OF THE MILL.

I.

GOLDEN years ago, in a mill beside the sea,
There dwelt a little maiden, who plighted her
faith to me ;
The mill-wheel now is silent, the maid's eyes closèd be ;
And all that now remains of her, are the words she
sang to me.

“ Do not forget me ! Do not forget me !
Think sometimes of me still,
When the morn breaks, and the throstle awakes,
Remember the maid of the mill ! ”

II.

Leaden years have passed, grey-haired I look around ;
The earth has no such maidens now, such mill-wheels
turn not round.

But whenever I think of Heaven, and of what the
angels be,

I see again that little maid, and hear her words to me.

“ Do not forget me ! Do not forget me !
Think sometimes of me still,
When the morn breaks, and the throstle awakes,
Remember the maid of the mill ! ”



LOVE'S STAR.

I.

IN the stream, one star above
Lies reflected brightly here.
In my darkened life one love
Shines through all the distance clear.
Half the night long, by the stream, Love,
I am watching that pale star,
Till I fall asleep to dream, Love,
And behold thy face, afar.

II.

Through the darkness round me spread
Heaven's pure star of Love prevails,
In the thicket over head
Murmur low the nightingales.
Half the night long, by the stream, Love,
I am watching that pure star,
Till I fall asleep to dream, Love,
And behold thy face afar.



THE DANUBE RIVER.

DO you recall that night in June,
 Upon the Danube river?
 We listened to a Ländler tune,
 We watched the moonbeams quiver.
 I oft since then have watched the moon,
 But never, Love, oh! never,
 Can I forget that night in June,
 Adown the Danube river!

II.

Our boat kept measure with its oar,
 The music rose in snatches,
 From peasants dancing on the shore
 With boist'rous songs and catches.
 I know not why that Ländler rang
 Through all my soul—but never
 Can I forget the songs they sang
 Adown the Danube river.



WHEN WE ARE PARTED.

I.

WHEN we are parted let me lie
 In some far corner of thy heart,
 Silent, and from the world apart,
 Like a forgotten melody.
 Forgotten of the world beside,
 Cherisht by one, and one alone,
 For some loved memory of its own ;
 So let me in thy heart abide
 When we are parted !

II.

When we are parted, keep for me
 The sacred stillness of the night ;
 That hour, sweet Love, is mine by right ;
 Let others claim the day of thee !
 The cold world sleeping at our feet,
 My spirit shall discourse with thine ;—
 When stars upon thy pillow shine,
 At thy heart's door I stand and beat,
 Though we are parted.



"OVER THE MOUNTAIN AND DOWN TO THE SEA."

I.

UP in the morning, ere daylight is breaking,
Over the mountain and down to the sea,
All nature round me, from slumber awaking,
Calls me to thee, Love, calls me to thee.

II.

Then in the heat of the noon's burning hour,
Over the mountain, and down to the sea,
Bees humming round from the heart of each flower,
Call me to thee, Love, call me to thee.

III.

Last, when the moon in her glory rejoices,
Over the mountain and down to the sea,
Nightingales round me with messenger voices
Call me to thee, Love, call me to thee.



BIRD, on the eaves of my beloved's dwelling,
Sing out what I would breathe into her ear;
May the full love within my bosom swelling,
Through thee find utterance, musical and clear.

Swifter than thine, my spirit's wing will take me,
And where thou can'st not go, through crystal pane;
But love's interpreter to her I make thee,
On window-sill, outpouring thy-rich strain.

Tell her my heart beats with tumultuous passion,
For the soft haven of its long unrest:
In spring, from our dead past, new hopes we fashion,
As thou tak'st mosses from thy last year's nest.

And though through wintry seasons we are parted,
Still in her faith, as in a mantle, furl'd,
Bid her be steadfast and courageous-hearted,
Nor bow before the keen breath of the world.

Sing thy bold music, ever shriller, crisper,
Through every room thy passionate love-songs sing;
But when thou fliest hence, in autumn, whisper,
"Love, once enthroned here, never can take wing."



“MY LOVE’S WORTH ALL THE WORLD.”

MY love’s worth all the world to me :
 Her walk, to others’ dance, is light.
 When she comes by, the sun rides high,
 And when she’s past, ’tis night !

Her gentle voice, that bids “good-day,”
 Is music that my soul loves best ;
 Her deep-set eyes, her low replies,
 The dreams that haunt my rest.

Her presence, like fresh morning showers,
 Gives to all things refreshing grace ;
 If she but stoop, sweet buds that droop,
 Gaze up into her face.

That May-day face—where nothing lives
 That is not bright, for long together ;
 Thoughts come and go, like winds that blow
 The clouds in golden weather.

Life’s passing shades have scarcely chill’d
 The gladness of her spirit’s light—
 O when she’s by, the sun seems high,
 And when she’s past, ’tis night !



TOO LATE.

I WOULD have made a song in spring,
 But dissonance my young heart haunted,
 A chord untrue I would not sing,
 I could not find the words I wanted.
 The autumn brought the notes, the words—
 The music that should rule my fate,
 The true solution of the chords—
 I found it all—too late !

I would have drawn in summer days
 The portrait that my fancy painted !
 The eyes—the forehead, crown'd with bays,
 The smile by no deception tainted—
 I found that noble type at last :
 The snow was falling round my gate ;
 A knight, in armour clad, rode past—
 Rode past ! . . . It was too late !

October, 1880.



IN THE EVENING.

I.

MY love, when life was young, I knew
 But little what you were to be,
 A light more bounteous to me,
 While lengthening shadows grew.
 Have I been silent, Love? or cold?
 It may be you have little guess'd
 All the strong love, half-unexpress'd,—
 Stronger, as I grew old.

II.

But, Darling, when the day is done,
 And we together walk at peace,
 In that bright world, where sorrows cease,
 Beyond the set of sun :
 What best of me you brought to light
 On this dark earth shall there expand,
 And each shall wholly understand
 What now is hid from sight.

April, 1880.



CHANGE.

I.

MY Love is gone to live in London town,
 Has left the hills and cottage of her youth,
 For silk has changed her simple russet-gown,
 Barter'd for gold her constancy and truth.
 Ah ! is she happy ? If I thought she were,
 Would there be comfort for me in despair ?

II.

My Love is gone to grace the crowded ways,
 The hawthorn lanes are empty of delight,
 The woods no longer echo with her praise,
 And on each budding rose hath fall'n a blight.
 Ah ! is she happy ? If I thought she were,
 Would there be comfort for me in despair ?

1881.



THE KING.

I.

SHE has not found her King as yet
 The golden days go by,
 They bring no sorrows to forget,
 Nor any cause to sigh.
 No heart for her devotion made,
 The passionate summers bring,
 Unharm'd she walks, and unaffray'd ;—
 She has not found her King.

II.

Men bring their titles and their gold ;
 She smiles, and turns away ;
 The man must be of other mould,
 The man whom she'll obey.
 Though poor in honours and in land,
 Rich in a rarer thing,
 Titled by God alone he'll stand
 Whom she will own her King.

III.

But when he comes, as come he will,
 A sceptre in his hand,

With supplication that shall fill
Her soul like a command.
Straightway will she obey, and take
Whate'er this world may bring ;
Proud and contented for his sake,
Whom she hath made her King.

Aug. 1878.



THE WILD WIND.

THE wild wind blows from far away,—
What message to the sons of men?
Refresh and purify, and play
Among our fever'd haunts, and then
Die gently with the death of day!

O, would, my far-off Love, that I
For one short hour at morn could flee
Like that wild wind, across the sky,
And having kiss'd thy lips—for me,
It were enough—and I would die!

Aug. 19th, 1878.



THE FORSAKEN.

I.

SHE sat beside the mountain springs,
Her feet were on the water's brink,
And oft she wept when she beheld
The birds that lighted there to drink ;
She wept : but as they spread their wings,
Her sweet voice followed them on high—
“ He will return—I know him well ;
He would not leave me here to die.”

II.

And there she sat, as months rolled on,
Unmindful of the changing year ;
She heeded not the sun, or snow,
All seasons were alike to her.
She looked upon the frozen stream,
She listened to the night bird's cry ;
“ He will return—I know him well ;
He would not leave me here to die.”

III.

And still she sits beside the springs,
And combs the gold drips of her hair ;

Red berries for a bridal crown
At early morn she places there.
At every shadow on the grass
She starts, and murmurs with a sigh,
"He will return—I know him well;
He would not leave me here to die."



THE BIRD'S WARNING.

A BIRD is calling from bower to brake,
 Awake! Awake!
 The Ladye treads lightly the turret stair,
 Her true Knight waits in the thicket there.
 Awake! Awake!

A bird is singing from topmost bough,
They are happy now !
Shaking out songs of wild delight
From his covert of leaves, o'er the Ladye and Knight.
They are happy now !

A bird is wheeling in midmost air,
Beware ! Beware !
 But the lovers are deaf to his call, Alas !
 A shadow comes stealing across the grass . . .
Beware ! Beware !

A bird is moaning up in the tree,—
Ah ! woe is me !
Wedded at last by a rapier-thrust,
They lie locked together in death-cold dust.
Ah ! woe is me !



COME A HUNDRED YEARS.

HOUND in leash and hawk in hand,
 I sought my lady fair and fine ;
 "I thee endow with half my land,
 An thou consentest to be mine."
 "All these will pass away," she said,
 "Naught will remain to me when dead,
 Come a hundred years!"

"Fame," I cried, "when life grows cold,
 Lives in men from mouth to mouth,
 Thee I'll crown with a crown of gold,
 And sing thy praise through all the South."
 "Alas!" she sighed, "or praise or blame,
 To me it will be all the same,
 Come a hundred years!"

"I'll sing thee, Dear, with such true love,
 As shall proclaim thy rarest worth,
 In vain for me, where'er I rove,
 Shall shine the brightest eyes of earth."
 She smiled, "Beyond the moth and rust,
 This only will not turn to dust,
 Come a hundred years!"



"GREEN GROWS THE WILLOW."

BALLAD.

O! I LOVE my love the best,
 Green grows the willow,
 With the gold cross on her breast,
 Lying down to take her rest
 On her green turf pillow.

Calm she looks, nor shy, nor bold,
Green grows the willow,
When mine eyes pierce the fresh mould,
Where she lies, in white robes stoled,
On her green turf pillow.

Calm she looks, and very fair,
Green grows the willow,
With the grass-roots in her hair—
O ! my love is constant *there,*
On her green turf pillow.

False was she that now is kind,
Green grows the willow,
 Blow it East or Western wind,
 Nothing now can change her mind,
On her green turf pillow.

Living, we were sundered wide,

Green grows the willow,

Dead, shall nothing us divide,

When we two sleep side by side

On our green turf pillow.



THE KNIGHT'S HORN.

A KNIGHT rode forth in golden mail,
 Along the river strand,
 A Ladye o'er the castle-wall
 Leant forth, and waved her hand.
 "Thine, thine till death!" the Ladye sighed;
 The Knight's Horn echoed far and wide,
 "When next I blow that call," he cried,
 "Reply, Love, then as now!"
 The Horn along the morning air
 Leapt clear, as down a silver stair,
 Tra, la, la, Tra, la, la,
 As the Knight did blow.

Years after, late one summer eve,
 There rode along that strand
 An aged Knight; his silver horn
 He grasped with trembling hand.
 He blew; and yet the blast he blew
 No answer from the Castle drew.
 "Ah! is she dead or false?" (none knew!)
 The old Knight dwelt alone:
 But often, as he paced the wall,
 The peasants heard that bugle-call,
 Tra, la, la, &c.,
 On the silence blown.

And still the boatmen, as they ply
 Their ferry o'er the tide,
And children, at their evening play
 Along the river side,
Hear the faint Horn that echoes blow,
Among the mountains, crowned with snow,
And whisper to each other, "Lo !
 The Knight his Ladye calls !"
And as the echo dies away,
"Alas ! she answers not," they say—
 Tra, la, la, &c.,
Listen how he calls !



MORNING CHORALE.

THE Golden East is breaking clean,
 And one by one now disappear
 The trembling stars :
 Grey shadows into purple melt,
 And wider grows the horizon's belt ;
 The opening bars
 Of Day's great symphony are felt,
 Awake ! Awake !

From wind-stirred bough the whispering leaves
 Begin to sing : from cottage eaves
 The wakening bird :
 The flowers arise, refreshed and strong,
 And, through the world, great Nature's song
 Once more is heard.
 Hark ! through the hills it rings along,
 Awake ! Awake !



A SONG to lay at the feet of my Love—
Something that when the singing is done,
And the singer himself hath past away,
May recall the voice of that absent one,
And the whispered love of a vanished day—
This would I lay at the feet of my Love.

A rose to lay at the feet of my Love—
To live in her hair for just as long
As my singing may linger about her heart,
But whose petals shall keep, as shall the song,
Their sweetness, when colour and voice depart—
This will I lay at the feet of my Love.

A heart to lay at the feet of my Love !
To leave it there in its simple truth,
Not for a day—not for a day—
Strong to endure, when the heat of youth,
• And cold mid-age shall have past away—
Such heart I lay at the feet of my Love !



THE DAY OF LIFE.

DAY of Life ! thine hours are fast advancing,
Faster, one by one !
Brilliant hopes, like diamonds adorning
Dewy meadows, disappear with morning,
'Neath the noon-day sun.

Now the mid-day heat and passion burneth,
May my arm be strong
To plough in Life's broad field beside my neighbour,
Singing with cheerful heart that lightens labour,
The old untiring song !

Cast me gently on the shore at evening,
With the one I love !
May a sunset golden-calm surround us,
Sliding into darkness, where it found us,
Till the Dawn above !



HYMN TO NIGHT.

O HOLY Night !
Send down thine angel, Sleep,
On weary hearts,
And watching eyes that weep.
As on a mother's breast,
In all our daily grief,
We fly to thee for rest
And find relief !
• Soother of human sighs,
Father of lullabies,
King of a world that lies
Far out of sight ;
O ! Holy Night !
In all our daily grief
We fly to thee for rest,
And find relief !



THE FISHER.

“FISHER, if beside this stream
 Thou hast stood since break of day,
 Hast thou seen a ladye fair,
 Wandering up or down this way?”
 “I have stood beside the stream
 All day long,” the Fisher said,
 “I have seen no ladye fair
 Save the ladye who is dead,
 Floating down the stream.”

“This can ne’er my true love be ;
 She was full of life and light ;
 E’en the lilies on her breast
 Cannot yet be faded quite.
 She hath eyes wide open, clear,
 Lips and cheeks of healthy red.”—
 —“I have seen no ladye here
 Save the ladye who is dead,
 Floating down the stream.”

“And the red was on her lip,
 And the light was in her eye,
 And the lilies on her breast
 Had not yet had time to die !”—

*Then I flung me on the ground,
O! the passionate tears I shed!
Would that I were there, at peace,
With the ladye who is dead
Floating down the stream.*



THE SKIPPER AND HIS BOY.

HIGH ran the sea, and the wind was wild,
 When the skipper called to his only child,
 "My boy, if fears assail thee now,
 Go pray in silence down below."
 "Fear!" cried the boy, "I know not fear,
 Father, when thy right arm is near . . .
 But merry it is, when the waves run high,
 To ride together, my father and I !

"Mother will watch from the door, and pray
 For us both, dear father, till break of day ;
 And she'll be the first, when her prayer is done,
 To catch sight of our sails 'neath the morning sun."
 "Yes, yes," quoth the skipper, brief and stern,
 "To-morrow shall see our bark return
 O'er the green waves, 'neath the morning sky,
 We'll ride together, my boy and I !"

The mother is watching—but never more
 Will that gallant skipper return to shore !
 The boy's black handkerchief lies on the sand,—
 It was tied round his neck by her parting hand.
 And all that doth of the skipper remain,
 Is the compass he never shall use again.
 But she knows that now, on the Jasper Sea,
 They ride together, his boy and he !

EFFIE.

I STOOD in the silent playground,
Where I had been wont to hear
The voice of my little Effie
Ringing out sweet and clear.
But the words of the child who was left me
Rebuked my grief that day,—
“Sister cannot come to us, Father,
She is now with the Angels at play.”

The song that she left half finished,
Was Heaven’s pure song of love;
Her life was a short burst of music,—
She has gone now to end it above.
There is one beam the more in Heaven
Since God beckoned Effie away,
And her sister has taught me to know it;—
She is now with the Angels at play!



TWILIGHT-SONG.

CLOSE thine eyes, the day is done ;
Lay thee down to sleep,
Fold thy pinions broad and strong,
That have borne thy soul along,
O'er the troubled deep.

Life, my child, is like the day—
May its morn be blest !
Take thou manfully thy share
Of allotted toil and care,
Then lie down and rest.

Only once, the morning breaks ;
Noon will bring its tears ;
Through the shadow and the sun,
Soon our little race is run,
And the night appears.



THE MUSIC OF THE SEA.

I HAVE not seen the glorious sea
 Since I was a little child,
 Ocean-bred in a fisher's hut,
 Washed by the waters wild.
 And now the shells upon my shelf
 Are dearer than aught to me !
 My soul still longs and listens for
 The music of the sea.

I learnt to walk to the sound of waves,
 The shingly beach along ;
 The salt-spray dashed against the pane,
 That was my cradle-song.
 The sea-mews' cry was far before
 The thrushes' song to me,
 O ! my heart still longs and listens for
 The music of the sea.

To drag nets filled with gleaming fish
 Under the silver moon ; •
 To watch ships on the far blue line
 Grow nearer in the noon ;
 To make friends with the whistling wind
 O'er the waves is the life for me ;—
 My heart longs wearily to hear
 The music of the sea !

And when my sails are furled at last,
Life's troublous voyage o'er,
I fain would fall asleep to that
Sweet sound upon the shore.
In the grey sand, could I but choose,
My narrow bed should be ;
And I should sleep more soundly for
The music of the sea !



THE GIRL TO HER BIRD.

SING, little Birdie, sing to me ;
 Beat not thy wings against the wire,
 Nor waste thy heart in vain desire

To be free !

"Open the door," I hear thee say,
 "And let me fly away, away,
 To haunts I know so green and cool,
 Where branches over-arch the pool.
 My cage is gilded—but the sky
 Is pleasanter. Oh ! let me fly !"

Shall ? or shall I not ? Ah me !

That truant Love were caged like thee,
 And never, never could get free !

Love, little Birdie, Love, I know
 Would here contentedly remain,
 Nor beat against the wires in vain,
 Nor pine to go !

"But Love enjoys," I hear thee cry,

"All Nature 'neath a sunlit sky ;

He drinketh ever at the springs

Of fresh delight, with folded wings :

Freedom were death to *him*—to *me*

Freedom is life ! Oh ! set me free !"

Poor Bird ! unlike to thee, I pray

That Love may here be caged some day—

The door is open—fly away !

BARCAROLE.

COME where the waves are rocking
 My bark upon their breast,
 As a mother lulls her little one
 To and fro to rest.
 Come, and beneath the quiet stars
 We'll sing, love, sweet and low,
 While the water laps around our oars,
 And the long waves come and go.
 Those waves run up and fill
 The star-lit sandy coves.
 Delay not thou until
 It be too late, my love !

Come, for the night is waning,
 The crescent moon is gone,
 The winds are whispering of the morn
 That shall appear anon.
 Come, while the world is hushed in sleep,
 And the stars alone can know
 The burthen of the songs we sing,
 As the long waves come and go—
 Those waves run up and fill
 The star-lit sandy coves,
 Delay not thou until
 It be too late, my love !

"I NEVER BREATHE HER NAME."

THERE is a lady I do know,
 And I love her still the same,
 Through the world where'er I go,
 Though I never breathe her name.

In the pilgrimage I make,
 Never shall my lips proclaim
 All I suffer for her sake,
 —And I never breathe her name.

Who is he that would not shield
 Her he loves from breath of blame?
 None this poisonous arm can wield;
 For I never breathe her name.

Thus until the close of day,
 Still, unseen, that constant flame
 Burns my secret life away,
 And I never breathe her name!



“IN MY LADY’S GARDEN.”

IN my lady’s garden, fair and tall,
 The stately lily grows,
 And its scent comes o’er the garden wall,
 When the West Wind blows.
 O wild West Wind ! O rare West Wind !
 Bid the East not so unkind to be,
 But in travelling hitherward to waft
 O’er that garden-wall a thought of me !

Underneath my Lady’s garden-wall,
 I sat at evening-time !
 In the stream I watched the blossom fall
 Of the flowering lime.
 O wild West Wind ! O rare West Wind !
 Waft down the blossoms of her love to me,
 And they will sweeten all my heart, O stream,
 As those fair blossoms, falling, sweeten thee !



THE MORNING AND EVENING STAR.

MORNING star that shin'st above her,
Guard my love from sorrow's frown,
Bid the happy hills to love her,
On her lattice looking down.
In between the roses peeping,
Smile upon her, Morning Star,
For I give her to thy keeping,
While I watch thee, from afar.

Evening star, my lady sleepeth !
Watch her with thy jealous ray,
Tell her so my fond heart keepeth
Watch, a thousand miles away.
And when sweet winds come a-gleaning
Songs of love across the sea . . .
May she at her casement leaning
Hear the words I breathe to thee.



"LOVE, WITHOUT THEE."

AH, for this weary life !
 Were there not peace with thee—
 Could I endure its strife,
 Did it not cease with thee ?
 Star of my dwelling-place,
 Where'er it be,
 Earth would have lost its grace,
 Love, without thee !

Time robbeth, day by day,
 Bright hours of youth from us,
 Yet steals he not away
 Constancy's truth from us.
 Star ! that with Morning's light,
 Shone over me,
 How could I meet the Night
 Love, without thee ?

Time, with unerring spade,
 Digs a grave low for us ;
 Yet shall not love be laid
 There, when tears flow for us.
 Star, that with purer beam
 Shines o'er Death's sea,
 Joyless would Heaven seem,
 Love, without thee !

AT MY FEET.

AT my feet she was playing there—
 In the old, old nursery days,—
 A baby with lengths of golden hair,
 And garrulous infant ways.
 The spot where she stood seemed ever
 Flooded with sunshine gay ;
 And she grew like the rolling river,
 Rapidly day by day.

At my feet she was kneeling there—
 A woman heart-broken and lorn,
 Alone with God in her great despair,
 When I found her again that morn !
 Years of storm and rain
 Had clouded that radiant face,
 As thus I beheld her once again,
 Praying for Christ's dear grace.

At my feet she is lying there !
 Safe at last from the tempest wild ;
 And knowing more of the Shepherd's care
 Than she did as a little child.
 After long years of pain,
 She sleeps 'neath the quiet sod,
 And the spirit, free from its mortal chain,
 Is at rest again with God.

LOVE, THE PILGRIM.¹

EVERY day a Pilgrim, blindfold,
 When the night and morning meet,
 Entereth the slumbering city,
 Stealeth down the silent street ;
 Lingereth round some battered doorway,
 Leaves unblest some portal grand,
 And the walls, where sleep the children,
 Toucheth, with his warm young hand.
 Love is passing ! Love is passing !—
 Passing while ye lie asleep :
 In your blessèd dreams, O children,
 Give him all your hearts to keep !

Blindfold is this Pilgrim, Maiden.
 Though to-day he touched thy door,
 He may pass it by to-morrow—
 —Pass it—to return no more.
 Let us then with prayers entreat him,—
 Youth ! her heart, whose coldness grieves,
 May one morn by Love be softened ;
 Prize the treasure that he leaves.
 Love is passing ! Love is passing !
 All, with hearts to hope and pray,
 Bid this pilgrim touch the lintels
 Of your doorways every day.

¹ Suggested by a sketch by E. Burne Jones.

YEAR AFTER YEAR.

IN at the open window
 The birds fly over her head,
 Laid on its snowy pillow,
 The gold hair round it spread.
 Meekly her palms are folded,
 Without a trouble or fear ;
 She lies there taking her rest—
 Year after year.

The birds fly round and round her !
 She neither moves nor speaks ;
 The fringed eyelids softly
 Rest on the marble cheeks.
 Those eyelids now are never
 Dimm'd by a falling tear ;
 She lies there taking her rest—
 Year after year.

It was thus she lay at morning,
 They painted her there that day ;
 And when the birds flew in next dawn,
 They had carried the dead away.
 But still by the open window,
 On that wall doth the maid appear ;
 And she lies there taking her rest—
 Year after year.

THE LOVER TO HIS MISTRESS.

NOT for the splendour of the brow that shines
 Upon me at this minute, Love,
 Not for the cunning ringlet that entwines,
 Snake-like, the finger in it, Love,—
 Not for thy wit, nor all thy radiant smiles,
 Nor that sweet voice that my dark hour beguiles,
 Do I adore thee ! But because I see
 Something none other has, Sweet-heart, in thee !

There is a beauty that a man desires,
 And wearies with possessing, Love—
 What is the secret charm that never tires ?
 A secret worth the guessing, Love !
 And thou hast guessed it—of the stars and moon,
 And glad-returning morn ; for I as soon
 Of Nature's fairest sights and sounds could tire,
 As, kneeling here, could other shrine desire !



"AFTERWARDS."

I.

WE can never meet again,
 For our lot is now decided ;
 Our two paths are now divided.
 Is it more of loss, or gain,
 To have loved thee once, as I did ?

II.

Nothing ever can efface
 The deep stain of my transgression ;—
 All the memories of possession,
 All a bleeding heart's disgrace,
 All a cruel world's oppression.

III.

Who has suffered, understands
 How, when Hope no longer borrows
 From the past, to gild our morrows,
 We can sit with folded hands,
 At the quiet end of sorrows.

IV.

"Was it better to have met"—
 So you sigh, in Love's December,
 Watching cold grey ash and ember—
 "Than have nothing to regret,
 And have nothing to remember ?"

Aug., 1881.

THE SONG'S MESSAGE.

I.

FLY to her heart, my little Song,
And say that unto her belong
Thy trills and graces ;
That, as I sing, before my eyes
I see the dearest face arise
Of all dear faces !

II.

Say that by night thou camest to me,
Like some poor bird, from o'er the sea
That feebly flutters ;
Till, soaring with morn's strength to sing,
The tender hopes of budding Spring
Once more it utters.

III.

O Song, like streamlet on its way,
That hath no respite, night or day,
Do not fatigue her !
But may thy melody at times
Floating, with its persistent rhymes,
Her heart beleaguer !

IV.

So, little Song, without applause,
In secret plead with her my cause,
Till her heart, ringing
With thy low music, hath confessed
That, of all songs, she loves the best
That of Love's singing!

April, 1881.



FROM A BATTLEMENT.

I.

O SWALLOW, hast thou found my knight?
 Last autumn, dost thou mind
 When thou wast wheeling round for flight,
 I charged thee, Bird, to find
 My Love, in lands beyond the sea,
 And give him heart's desire from me.

II.

Didst tell him that the child is grown?
 Didst tell him I wax thin?
 That his goss-hawk without is flown?
 His hound is dead within?
 Didst tell him that all night I pine
 To know his heart's desire is mine?

III.

Was he encamped on burning plain?
 Was he of goodly cheer?
 Alas! we may not meet again
 For many a weary year.
 Only I know my knight is true,
 And sent his heart's desire by you.

Sept., 1881.

SWEETHEART.

I.

SWEETHEART, I have no hero's face
 To plead my passion's cause,
 No knightly, no persuasive grace,
 To win a world's applause.
 What should I do—what can I be,
 Sweetheart, to be beloved of thee?

II.

The waters play not in my life,
 Like fountains sparkling clear ;
 They rush not with the torrent's strife ;
 Mine is the deep, still mere,
 Where one bright face, beloved by me,
 Sweetheart, I still reflected see.

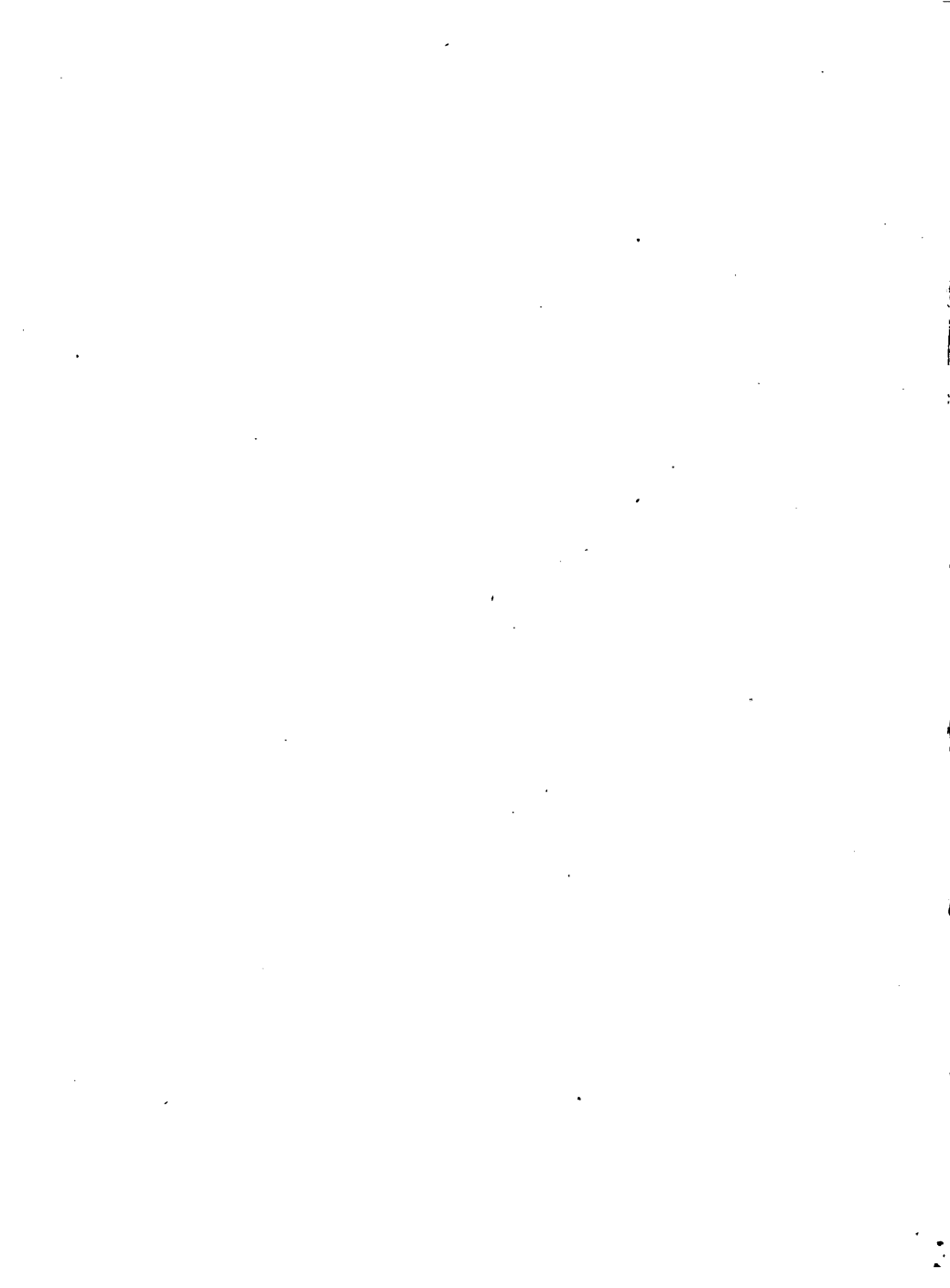
III.

No buds of Spring, no tender shoots,
 No Summer flowers that fade,
 Only the Autumn's mellow fruits
 Are mine. Art thou afraid,
 Sweetheart, to trust thy life to me,
 Who would lay down my life for thee?

Oct., 1881.



RECITATIONS.



LOST AND FOUND.

SOME miners were sinking a shaft in Wales—
 (I know not where,—but the facts have filled
 A chink in my brain, while other tales

Have been swept away; as when pearls are spilled,
 One pearl rolls into a chink in the floor :)
 —Somewhere, then, where God's light is killed,

And men tear in the dark, at the earth's heart-core,
 These men were at work, when their axes knocked
 A hole in a passage closed years before.

A slip in the earth, I suppose, had blocked
 This gallery suddenly up, with a heap
 Of rubble, as safe as a chest is locked,

Till these men picked it; and 'gan to creep
 In, on all-fours. Then a loud shout ran
 Round the black roof,—“ Here's a man asleep ! ”

They all pushed forward, and scarce a span
 From the mouth of the passage, in sooth, the lamp
 Fell on the upturned face of a man.

No taint of death, no decaying damp
 Had touched that fair young brow, whereon
 Courage had set its glorious stamp.

Calm as a monarch upon his throne,
Lips hard clenched, no shadow of fear,
He sat there taking his rest, alone.

He must have been there for many a year.
The spirit had fled ; but there was its shrine,
In clothes of a century old or near !

The dry and embalming air of the mine
Had arrested the natural hand of decay,
Nor faded the flesh, nor dimmed a line.

Who was he then ? No man could say
When the passage had suddenly fallen in—
Its memory, even, was past away !

Awestruck, they stood : then, touched the skin,
And handled the cloth. The flame o' the soul
Had been blown out, ere its lamp grew thin.

In their great rough arms, begrimed with coal,
They took him up, as a tender lass
Will carry a babe, from that darksome hole,

To the outer world of the short warm grass.
Then up spoke one, " Let us send for Bess,
She is seventy-nine, come Martinmass :

Older than anyone here, I guess !
Belike, she may mind when the wall fell there,
And remember the chap by his comeliness."

So they brought old Bess with her silver hair,
To the side of the hill, where the dead man lay,
Ere the flesh had crumbled in outer air.

And the crowd around him all gave way,
As with tottering steps old Bess drew nigh,
And bent o'er the face of the unchanged clay.

Then suddenly rang a sharp low cry ! . . .
Bess sank on her knees, and wildly tossed
Her withered arms in the summer sky. . . .

"O Willie ! Willie ! my lad ! my lost !
The Lord be praised ! after sixty years,
I see you again ! . . . The tears you cost

O Willie darlin', were bitter tears ! . . .
They never looked for ye underground,
They told me a tale to mock my fears !

They said ye were auver the sea,—ye'd found
A lass ye loved better nor me, to explain
How ye'd a-vanished fra' sight and sound !

O Darlin' ! a long, long life o' pain
I ha' lived since then ! . . . And now I'm old,
'Seems a-most as if youth were come back again,

Seeing ye there wi' yer locks o' gold,
And limbs sa straight as ashen beams, . . .
I a'most forget how the years ha' rolled

Between us ! . . . O Willie ! how strange it seems
To see ye here, as I've seen ye oft, . . .
Auver and auver again in dreams ! ”

In broken words like these, with soft
Low wails she rocked herself. And none
Of the rough men around her scoffed.

For surely a sight like this, the sun
Had rarely looked upon. Face to face,
The old dead love, and the living one !

The dead, with its undimmed fleshly grace,
At the end of threescore years ; the quick,
Puckered, and withered, without a trace

Of its warm girl-beauty ! A wizard's trick
Bringing the youth and the love that were,
Back to the eyes of the old and sick !

Those bodies were just of one age : yet there
Death, clad in youth, had been standing still,
While Life had been fretting itself threadbare !

But the moment was come ;—(as a moment will,
To all who have loved, and have parted here,
And have toiled alone up the thorny hill ;

When, at the top, as their eyes see clear,
Over the mists in this vale below,
Mere specks their trials and toils appear,

Beside the eternal rest they know !)
Death came to old Bess that night, and gave
The welcome summons that she should go.

And now, though the rains and winds may rave,
Nothing can part them. Deep and wide,
The miners that evening dug one grave.

And there while the summers and winters glide,
Old Bess and young Willie sleep side by side !



THE STORY OF TWO LIVES.

(As related in a morning visit.)

- A. **W**ELL! well! How strangely things fall out!
 So they are married? Do you know
 That he is old, and rather stout,
 And she is fifty-six or so?
- B. Ah, that is vulgar reckoning,—
 And Love is blind! To him she seems
 Still young and fair—and he, the king
 Remains, of all her early dreams . . .
 Shall age two faithful souls divide?
 Shall years prevent two hearts from loving?
 What constancy was ever tried
 More than this couple's? . . . Do you doubt it?
- A. Humph! well, perhaps, for turtle-doving
 They may be thought a trifle old—
 But tell me all you know about it.
- B. 'Tis an old tale, and often told;
 Now more than forty years since they
 Were parted: penniless was he,
 An orphan youth, and sweet Anne Grey,
 The beauty of the "North Countrie."
 It never could be heard of! *never!*—
 There was a talk of broken hearts,—

- A. Ah, boys and girls in vain endeavour
To break *those* toys ; at least the parts
I think so soon unite again,
(Except, perhaps, some tiny particles !)
That even if the crack remain,
They still are *serviceable articles* !
- B. Well then, as hearts in life are tougher
Than novels make them, Annie Grey
Lived on, when he was sent away ;
Although the road of life was rougher,
And storms and biting winds did blow
Round the heart's door. She said her mind
Would never change, and was resigned
To see her girlhood's hero go.
Could she not wait ? The pebble lies
Contented on the silent beach,
Until the waves triumphant reach,
And in their arms sweep off, the prize.
She said so : but her voice was sad—
Her father swore the girl was mad !
This father was a man of honour,
(Men called him,) of a poor, proud race,
Who every day impressed upon her
That all her fortune was her face—
The boy had only love and youth !
(It must be owned a slender rental),
Combined with that uncringing truth
To fortunes often detrimental.
And so his Uncle John decreed
In conference with Mr. Grey,
That it was well, with all good speed

To send the orphan lad away—
That he should cross the seas, and fight
Beneath the burning Indian sun,
And win a fortune, if he might,
As other friendless youths had done.
And if he fell, why who was there
A narrow piece of crape to wear,
But Uncle John?

The years rolled by; they might not write,
His letters were returned unread;
And yet his love swerved not—in spite
Of all his Uncle John had said.
He kept undimmed before his eyes
The constant hope of that one prize.
And then at last a false report

Reached him, that she was married: She
Of whom each night and morn he thought,
For whom he worthier strove to be!
Ambition's fairest star was set:

Thenceforth, this soldier only fought
For Duty's sake, not Love's—and yet
When good results from evil rise,
You stoics ask with some surprise,
(The end being happy,) where the harm is? . .

Certain it is the service gained
A sterner man, more self-contained,
A better general of armies!
From heart of youth the violets died;
In heart of man the oak spread wide.
And while the soldier's fame grew up,

And bays were twined to deck his brow,
She, like an acorn in its cup

Dwelt lonely on her parent bough.
Her boisterous brothers drank and swore,
And shot, or hunted all the day :
And home their booted friends they bore,
Who made fierce love to Annie Grey.

But obdurate to all was she,
While youth to middle age slid by :
Her father died ; she lived to see

One after one, her kindred die.
Four brothers to the grave she carried :
And still Anne Grey remained unmarried.

Her life was like the silent floor,
Where pattered tiny feet of yore ;
And like those solitary walls,
That echoed once to children's calls ;
The faded portraits of the past,
In *pastille*—far too bright to last !
The line of empty rooms, shut up ;
The marble naiad's moss-grown cup :
The old piano's rusted string,
Where sweetest music used to ring,
The one cracked jar, where erst a pair
Held richest perfumes from the air—
All, all around, with types were rife,
Of that lone heart and joyless life !

Was she still waiting, then ? Ah, no !
That was a dream of long ago,

That, like the sun, had glorified
The morning of her summer's day.
And, like that golden sun, had died
Behind the purple hills away.
She was not waiting. She was sure
They never more on earth should meet,
Yet still her Hero's name was sweet ;
Her pride in all his fame was pure—
She neither knew, nor asked *the rest*. . . .
(For Uncle John long since was dead ;)
The Hero's public deeds she read.
The story of his heart she guessed !
Some woman in those Indian years
Had wound about his heart a snare,
She *might* be good—she must be fair—
Pray God she had not caused him tears !
Thus to herself the spinster thought,
As winter after winter brought
The snow-flakes on her auburn bands,
And loosed the rings upon her hands.
And then she murmured, "'Tis our lot
That what in all the heat and strife
Of man's career is soon forgot,
Should make a lonely woman's life."

And what of him the while? the man,
Who bronzed and scarred on Indian plains,
Now forty years were past, began
To feel the penalties and pains
Of that hard life of self-denial?
One arm the less, and K.C.B. !—

With these rewards for years of trial,
At length he sighed to cross the sea.
The thought of home is doubly dear
After unrest, and toil, and strife :
But what had honours done to cheer
The solitary end of life ?
—A Club arm-chair from noon till night :
His home a lodging in Pall-Mall !
It was not thus Hope painted bright
The Home that he should love so well !
But that was long ago ; since then,
How changed is all ! Old friends are dead ;
Old school-boys now are battered men,
Their grandsons are about to wed !
He—only he hath let the tide
Of life flow past him, standing still.
Little to mark the years, until
He stands that youthful race beside.
A bachelor of fifty-nine
May well, indeed, for home repine !

But Fate, so rarely kind to those
Who bend not circumstance to will,
Decreed that tow'rds their Autumn's close,
Those lives should crown each other still.
She rarely left the home-estate ;
But now she must to town, to wait
Upon a cousin who had written,
To say that she was sorely smitten
With divers ills ;—a flighty dame,
Unlike Anne Grey, who, all the same

Loved her and, being here, consented
To stay and see the Exhibition ;
Though it was plain her friend's condition
Of lung and limbs had been invented
To lure that ever-welcome comer !

Thus it fell out. One day, last summer,
The General had stood for more
Than half an hour transfixed, before
"The Reading Girl," that sculptured rhyme,
Of youth's sweet passion-budding time.
His thoughts perhaps had travelled back,
Into the unforgotten track
Of the far Past : and in the place
Of marble, rose a fair young face
He used to watch in by-gone days,
When, under evening's slanting rays,
A girl sat thus intent—and read
The stories of the noble dead.
And lo ! while fancied semblance, traced,
Slowly with life the stone replaced,
Sudden, 'twixt him and it, there cross'd
A visage in the flesh, almost
As white, as though from the same block
Of marble hewn : but wasted, dim,
As a dream-phantom ; while on him
The eyes turned mournfully. A shock
Ran through his heart—he scarcely heard
A shrill voice near him, till the sound
Of his own name his senses stirred,
And then the old man started round.

"Well! really this is quite a treat,

To meet you, General, in this buzz

And crowd—reposing on a seat!

We hav'n't met for such an age!

But then you know one never *does*

In London,—in this *Hermitage*

I call it, where it's such a labour

To find out who's one's next-door neighbour!

And one may live secluded, quite

As much as any anchorite,

And never see a friend unless

One lives among the parks and squares,—

No friendship stands two-shilling fares;

And, as you know, a wilderness

Beyond Tyburnia is *my* home!

But, General, you're a Hero! Come,

Be brave, to-morrow dine with me—

Though lest you should not find a Hansom,

On your return, 'twere well to be

Clad in strong armour *cap à pic*,

(Like the dark Knight in Millais' 'Ransom'),

You'll come, now, won't you? need I send

A note? . . . Remember that we dine

At seven. . . Ah! let me, by the way,

Present you, General, to my friend—

A country cousin—Miss Anne Grey."

'Twas thus, with commonplaces round,

With "quips, and cranks, and wreathed smiles,"

That after life's wide-sundered miles

They once again each other found.

For thus in life the Melodrame
And Comedy so often meet—
As through church doors the solemn Psalm
Blends with the music of the street.
You guess the rest ; how forty years
In that one hour had melted quite,
Like the dark vapours of the night,
When the first streak of dawn appears.
And how once more they seemed to stand,
A shower of bright spring blossoms o'er them,
A Youth and Maiden, hand in hand,
With Love, and Hope and Life before them.
Who now in Autumn's shortening days
Were met at last—unchanged and true,
In spite of all the world could do :
They knew it as their steadfast gaze
Crossed in that hour. For why, in sooth,
Should not true hands and hearts, being met,
Be clasped in age as in their youth ?
And so in steadfast comfort set
Their feet together on the last
Remaining rounds of life's dark ladder ?
Instead of brooding on their past,
And growing gloomier and sadder,
Careless of self, of all each day . . .
Now, tell me, will not poor Anne Grey
Be infinitely better married ?
A. My dear, your eloquence has carried
Me over to your side completely !
I think your General acted sweetly ;
I wish he wasn't quite so stout,

But seriously I'm half inclined
(I'm only sixty) to look out
And see if I perhaps can find
Some bald old gentleman in stocks,
Who loved me fifty years ago
In little pinafores and frocks !
I might get up a touching show
Of constancy.

B. Ah ! well my friend,
The hour is yours—but by and by
Laugh those who win ! when you and I
Approach in loneliness the end
Of life, it may be we shall share
One wish—to be as this old pair.



THE LADY'S PUNISHMENT.

I MET a lady in the narrow path,
 That leadeth up into the wood of pines,
 Whose red and jagged stems are clothed aloft
 With marble foliage. Her face was white,
 And with one hand she held her kirtle up,
 Brimmed o'er with early flowers ; cyclamen,
 Anemone, and starry buds, whose name
 I knew not. With the other hand,
 She touched me on the arm, and sighing, said,
 " Follow and I will show what things, and how
 We sow in maddest joy, and reap in tears."
 She turned, she glided up the wood ; and I
 Followed, as one pursuing in a dream,
 Resistless, step by step, my pale-faced guide,
 To where a dusky thicket closed about
 A little space of turf,—a mound—no more :
 And here she stopped, and let her kirtle drop
 Its rosy treasures on the green earth's lap ;
 Then turned on me the stone-blue eyes, from which
 Passion long since had drunk the tears away,
 And once again in measured accents spake.
 " In life my sin and punishment were hid
 And now long since my very name is wiped

Out of men's memories. But haply here,
The story of my grief, my life-long grief,
May reach in this new world hearts that are deaf
Unto the Preacher's voice.

“ I was the child
And heiress of a robber-lord, who once
In yonder tower, where reigns the owl, held rule ;
Clenching his mailed hand on the march around.
No princess, in the days of old was kept
Curtained more closely from the chance side-wind
Of love, that heedeth not degrees, nor wealth,
But where he listeth, blows. Therefore, for me,
Those only might come near my feet, endowed
With great inheritance, or whose right arms
Had compassed sov'reign mastery in raid,
And foray. But of all these wolfish lords
Not one had grace to win a woman's heart,
Or child's,—for I was scarcely more, and turned
Laughing from each, to falcon and to hound,
And better pleased to play at ball, or dance
In rings with all my merry maids, than list
To vows of love . . . at least, I thought so then ;
Till that soft side-wind took me unawares
And captured me one morn. Upon this wise,
It fell about. My father was away
And I, my falcon on my wrist, rode forth,
A train about me, through the flowery mead,
Where the stream, swelled by winter's snow and rain,
O'erlips its banks in spring. There, clad in grey,
We met a sad and solitary man,
Who with a deer-hound paced the river's marge—

His eyes were bent upon a book : but O !
Their strange and subtle beauty when he turned
His face, mid-day, upon me, drave the blood
Circling through all my veins. I galloped on,
Slipping the jesses of my bird, who soared
Above his quarry ; when my jennet, stung
By the sharp hand wherewith I urged her on,
Reared up on high, and falling backwards, plunged
Herself and me together in the stream.
Swift as the wind,—ere falconer and page
Could check their steeds and turn to succour me,
The man—the man in grey—had leapt the bank,
And striking out with one strong arm, he flung
The other round me, as I struggling sank. . . .
Thus it began. O stranger ! thus, the life
Won back, new light flowed through that open door.
From child to woman suddenly I sprang ;
Woman, with senses passionately stirred ;
Woman, who, loving, sacrifices all,
To the one God of her idolatry !
We met each morn : while yet the castle slept
I through the postern in my garden ran,
Creeping 'mong crystal moss and dewy fern,
'Neath daybreak's opal sky, to this black wood. . . .
Sweet stolen moments in the mists of dawn !
Love's precious childhood, who too soon grows old,
And blind, and passionless, alas !

We met

Each morn by stealth,—not otherwise ; for he,
Preserver, Lord, and Master of my life,
Had but his sword wherewith to win me then.

His brother's was the Seignury that marched
With ours, dividing sway from hill to hill ;
And he, the younger, dowered with strength alone,
Soldier of fortune, who had fleshed his sword
In the late wars,—my father would have spurned
His suit for me, whom riches, rank, and land
Alone might win. But hearts were never yet
Thus bartered : nor can such cold law infuse
Strength to repel One mightier than it,
When woman's veins have passionately drunk
His subtle poison. Speak thou to the soul
In such an evil—else unto the winds !
Plead with it—strive with it—hold fast the hem
Of its pure raiment : use such argument
As only reacheth that immortal part
Of man, or else be mute ! For, look you, what
Doth touch no more than this vile dust of ours,
How shall it shield us in our peril ? I
Knew but the honour of my house—no more—
No other guide—no other staff. . . . I fell. . .
I fell ! and all grew dark about my eyes. . . .
No less,—no less by reason of my sin,
I loved him—dearer than my life itself !
But when I thought that I might no more hold
A place unshamed among my fellow maids,
Nor any more be crowned by them, with buds
Of lilies, gathered in their kirtles green,
Lest each white virgin-flower should wither up
Upon my guilty brow,—when morn by morn,
I knew how suns and moons would rise and set,
Winter and summer bring the long years round,

But never, never, never a return
Of the proud spotless insolence of youth,—
My punishment began. . . .

He went away
To the great war in Flanders : and in days
Of maddest grief that followed, I became
A mother. In her arms with bitter tears
The aged woman who had nursed me, once
Now held my child, and he was borne away—
My boy—my own sweet babe ! who knew me not.
Nor never might a mother's blessing know—
Borne safe from prying eyes and babbling tongues
Safe from a father's wrath, beyond the hills.
And to my father some pretence was made
That I was sick'ning of the tertian plague,
And no one save one faithful maid, and she,
That aged nurse, came near me. Thus from men
My shame was secret ; and a year rolled by.

“ A year rolled by, and Death came striding on
Mowing down young and old, and high and low ;
On one hand, Hope rose smiling as he passed,
And on the other weeping went Despair.
Over against my window rose a hill,
And on its topmost crest a tow'r was set,
(A blot of purple 'gainst the sunset sky)
And in that tow'r they brought me word, lay dead
My true Knight's brother, childless, and alone. . . .
God pardon me ! . . . I wept aloud for joy,
To think how in the dead man's place, my Love
Should reign, and I become his honoured bride,

And have my baby back again, and all
The past be blotted out. So, outwardly
It came to pass, indeed ; for he returned,
And from my father straightway sought my hand,
And we were married.

On that very night,
Just such another starlit night as this,
While yet in hall the revelry was loud,
My Lord still pledging, as in honour bound,
His boisterous guests, I stole away to where
The stars made doubtful twilight on the wall.
Then, as I mused, the shadow of the nurse
Beside me sudden fell ; and lo ! She stooped
And plucked me by the sleeve, and hoarsely said,
' Come to yon wood, and I will show thee that
I dared not tell thee sooner.'

Then we trod
Along the dusky thicket, till we came
Unto this little mound, the nurse and I.
' Here lies '—she spake in murmurs low—' the child ;
Dead three months since . . . and it is better so.'
I did not rave or shriek. I did not fall.
From crown to foot I shook, and all the blood
Froze round my heart. O God ! and thus it was
My prayer was heard ! *The past was blotted out.*
Never to see my babe on earth, of whom
I dreamt each night, his little golden head
Smiling between the silver clouds—and now,—
And now ! to think that at my feet he lay,
Wrapped in the brown earth's arms instead of mine—
And I had never e'en beheld his eyes,

And should not know his little voice among
The angels' choir ! . . . Ah ! cruelly, indeed,
My prayer was heard—*my past was blotted out.*
Earth keeps her secrets well. No fear that mound
In the wild wood should tell my shame to men ;
But I was childless ! all my sorrow,—all,
Was nothing unto this. I walked away. . . .
I walked away, my face between my hands ;
And now 'twas very night : the stars were hid ;
And as I walked the cruel dread grew strong
Within my soul, that in that little grave
My hopes on earth lay buried. . . .

There was yet

Another grief in store for me, good Sir,
Which women who have fallen as I fell
May haply learn. Into my Lord's deep eyes,
I, looking for the passionate love that burned of yore,
Found nothing but a poor sad counterfeit,
An honourable subterfuge through which
The soul of Chivalry redeemed its pledge,
And wedded me. . . . Alas ! it might be now,
That I was changed, grown white and wan : my lip
Had lost its trick of smiling, and my voice
Carolled no longer, when upon his arm
I leant, as down the garden's length we paced.
And yet, I loved him better, clung to him
More closely now than ever, would have spurned
All other love. . . . But one dark cruel thought
Like a black bough across a pool, kept out
All sunshine from my heart. The child was dead !
The little life, whose leaves in darkness blown,

Might have expanded on a mother's breast,
Was gone—the only child that I should bear—
I knew it, and I could not smile, and thus
His love grew further from me ev'ry day,
And my life's burthen heavier to lift,
I could not blame him if the scent was fled
From the poor flower he had plucked,—too soon,—
And now wore openly i' his breast. My Lord
Was ever gentle, kind, and patient ;
But the old glamour of my eyes for him
Was dead ; and while I strove, and strove to be
The thing I was not, wider ev'ry day
I felt my frail bark drifting from the shore
That should have been my haven !

From my tow'r

I watched this wood of pines ; and stole each morn
Unseen, with flowers, to where my babe lay hid.
The months unrolled themselves to years : no hope
Blossomed again upon my barren boughs ;
While peasants' overladen orchards flung
Their rosy fruit beneath my castle wall,
I—I alone had no more fruit wherewith
To win my Lord's affection back to me !
And thus at last (but not till I had prayed
Morning and night) the frost struck at the root
Of this poor sapless tree. Grown old and grey
Before my time, what marvel that my Lord
Sought other women, fair and full of grace,
While ever bearing gently with me still
And my sad humours ? It was time to die :
For I was weary of my life, since all

That made it sweet was taken. Gossips' tongues
Should wag no more reproaches, that my Lord's
Inheritance must pass to distant hands,
When I was gone, and interchange of smiles
Could never vex my heart within the tomb.
And so I died. The mourners, two and two,
Bore me with pomp to the cathedral spire,
(I might not sleep beside my babe, alas!)
Where 'neath a fretted canopy I lay,
In the great church forgotten and alone.

"Stranger, three hundred years are past, and more ;
My Lord, and all his line of heirs, long since
Are gathered to the dust : yon keep alone
Tells of their greatness. Yet, within this wood,
Where in my life I suffered, loved, and sinned,
Where for long years my footsteps daily turned,
And joy lay compassed in three feet of earth,
Here, round this spot, one night in every year
'Tis given my soul to wander, and to tell
The old, old story of my griefs to whom
I find here. All who, sinning as I sinned,
Mourn with repentant tears, and turn to Christ,
Shall learn one day how crosses borne in life
In death are reared to bring us nearer Heav'n."

She said ; and fading from me as she spake,
I turned, astonished. . . . To my feet I sprang,
From the soft turf whereon I lay, and saw,
Between the interlacing leaves, the morn
Lifting her head already o'er the hill.

KING CHILDERIC IN THE CLOISTER.

A.D. 750.

GOD give me patience, miserable king
 That am, beneath the cowl ! on whom the sun
 Shines but one hour a day, when slanting through
 These cloister-arches : where my sandalled feet
 Break the grey moss-grown silence of the flags—
 I, that was wont to meet the sun at morn,
 And take my pleasure, as became a king,
 In sports, all day, across the plain. Woe's me !
 How changed am I !—seems all, that yet's unchanged !
 The same wind that, through purple curtains, scarce
 Lifted the rushes from my palace floor,
 In the old time, around a bare damp cell
 Now freezes all my bones. Ah ! hunger, thirst,
 Vigil and painful penance, come to none
 Of these poor monks so hardly as to me.
 For one hath left his vineyard by the Rhine,
 To whom, as he was delving on a day,
 The blessèd Mary showed herself : and one,
 A poor aureficer in Aix, whose house
 The plague left desolate. From mountain-hut,
 Or camp, or city, come they hither ; led
 By that strong inward voice, men christened Faith,
 But, like me, none . . . Well, well, and so, because
 I shun their simple talk of beeves and goats,

They whisper, that by reason of some crime
 Hanging like mill-stone round me, am I come
 To expiate the past. And here, in truth,
 I pace the flags each day ; and muse, as oft
 I watch the spiders weave athwart the wall
 Their silken death-nets for the foolish flies,
 "So weaved his webs around my helpless youth,
 Th' unloyal crafty head, where sits my crown :
 Founder, methinks, of a long line of kings."
 For so I dreamed last night it is decreed,
 The Merovingian race should pass away
 For ever,—*sicut herba transeat*—
 Then these in turn, gave place, their work being done.
 The builder setteth up, and pulleth down,
 Building his tow'r. We are but stocks and stones .
 Shaped to his mighty purpose.

Hark ! the bell
 Rings in to vespers ; and the brothers pass
 Down the side-cloister, eyeing me askance.
 Sweet sunshine—bird, upon the cloister roof,
 Farewell until to-morrow. Now they sing,
 "*Ecce quam bonum habitare est*
Fratres in unum." What a mock'ry 'tis !



GEORGE LEE.

"CHIVALRY is dead among us!"
 So sigh those who read the tale
 Of Arthur and his Knights. They wrong us.

Not alone to knights in mail
 Does that noble self-disdain,
 That recks not peril, strife, and pain
 In succour of the oppressed, pertain.

There are now, too, lives sublime,
 Heroes (let us thank God for it!)
 Whose bright deeds, from time to time,
 Cast a glow on these our days—

Some like beacons from a turret,
 Some uplifting lowly ways.

Listen, while I tell the story
 Of a humble man, George Lee,
 Who, in life unknown to glory,

Will in death remembered be,
 By the men 'mong whom he died,
 Their example and their pride.

"FIRE, FIRE, FIRE!"

THAT dread cry in dead of night
 Rouses the sleepers with affright,
 Adown the narrow squalid street;
 And while men stumble to their feet,

And snatch their earnings up with oaths,
Wives clasp their babes and tattered clothes,
And all run out into the ways,
On which the lurid firelight plays.
The faces of that crowd show plain
Starvation, misery, and pain :
Strange that to this sad life they cling
As much as placid priest, or king

 Upon his throne may do ! Along
The street, from every open door
And court and alley, fresh streams pour,
 To swell the dense excited throng.
The cry is " Water ! " now. Below
 The doomed house press the serried ranks,
 And pass the buckets from the tanks ;
While the bewildered inmates throw
All they can into the street.
The crowd screams out, " Come down ! A sheet
Of flame is rising, and the smoke
Grows dense ! Come down before it choke
Your breath ! " " Where are the engines ? See !
 It spreads ! God help us ! Not alone
This house ; the entire street will be
A blaze if they are long delayed !
 There's ne'er a hope for us but one—
The fire-brigade, the fire-brigade ! "

Hark !—God be thanked !—at last ! D'you hear
That distant roar that grows more near ?
" Fire, fire, fire ! " as on they tear
Down the close streets ; for dear life rushing,

Like a coal-black steed that is spurred to death,—
To right, to left, the people crushing,—
Sending sparks from its fiery breath,
The engine comes panting. Its riders draw up
Where the flames, now mounting to heaven, glow
On the pavement of human heads below,
And water is poured as into a cup,
On the seething walls and molten glass ;
And a smoke, as of hell, sweeps over all.
They have set the escape against the wall :
“There’s never a soul there, mates ?” cries Lee,
The fireman ; (he who, three days hence
With his strong right arm for competence,
Shall wed the girl he has loved from a boy—
Gallant George Lee, his comrades’ joy).

“No soul within ?” The crowd cries, “None !”
But e’en while they answer one halloos, “See,
There’s a woman up there, in the topmost room !”
Yes, at an open window, alone,
Looming out black against the glare,
Stands a shadow of hopeless, dull despair,
With folded hands, foreseeing her doom—
She is face to face with death.

One minute

Lee looks at her and the escape, no more ;
Then through the smoke that blinds the door
He springs over burning stair and floor,
Up to the roof, if he can but win it.
With tight-clenched lips that breathe no word,
Scorched and blinded, yet undeterred,
He struggles on. From below, men, seeing

The whole house now is one blazing stack,
Cry out, "It's never no use! Come back!"
But what is peril to sight or limb

If the life of a helpless human being
Has yet a chance to be saved by him?

So through the fumes that now oppress him,
Fainting, falling, he beats his way
To the room where the woman stands at bay,

With the flames, like bloodhounds, licking the edge
Of the window. They cry, "He's safe! God bless
him!"

Is he safe? He has reached her, seized her, stands
With her form in his arms on the parapet-ledge.

Men hold their breath; the sight appals
The stoutest hearts, for he reels; his hands
Cannot reach the escape. "O God in heaven,
Let him not die!" That prayer is given
With all men's hearts. He grasps a cleft
In the burning bricks, with just strength left

To save the woman, and then he falls!
A scream of horror runs down the street:
George Lee lies dead at the people's feet!

Children, ere you sleep to-night
In your cots secure from fear,
Think of those brave men who fight
For your lives when peril's near.
Other soldiers war with men;
These with fire,—a lowlier trade—
For their fellow-citizen,
Fight the fight of their brigade.

At your nursery window-sill
 Stand, and think, ere lying down,
 When the lonely streets are still,
 How they guard the sleeping town.

Children, ask not of your Father
 Honour, glory, length of days ;
 There is something I had rather
 You possessed, worth more than praise
 Of men or worldly profit. Ask
 For heart of grace and strength of will
 To be true heroes, and fulfil,
 Like this man, each his daily task ;
 Living for others—dying too
 Without a murmur, if need be.
 Bear him in mind : I breathe for you
 No better hope—be like George Lee !



THE NIGHT BEFORE THE BATTLE.

I.

I LEFT my tent at midnight,
And stood on a little hill,
The moon burned red in heaven,
And the camp lay husht and still ;

II.

Save by the hourly tramping
Of the picket on its beat,
The sentinel's sharp challenge,
As he paced the canvas street.

III.

The hour, from one to another
Cried with a clear "All's well !"
The curse of uneasy dreamers,
Tossing with shot and shell.

IV.

All else was frosty silent :
I thought on to-morrow's fight ;
How, when its heat was over,
Would return the quiet night.

V.

And I wondered, "Will those white tents
Be shining there the same?"
Then slowly riding through them,
A sable horseman came.

VI.

Clad in the ancient armour,
His vizor closed he kept,
Unchallenged by the sentinel,
Full in the moonlight swept.

VII.

His charger's hoof, I marvelled,
No ringing echo sent.
Sudden the horseman reined him up,
Before my captain's tent.

VIII.

I spake in fear, "What art thou?
Nor guardsman, nor dragoon,
That ridest thus in armour clad
Under the midnight moon?"

IX.

Then sighed a voice in answer,
Between his vizor's bands,
Like wind among the rushes
Along the river sands.

X.

"My name," he said, "thou knowest,
My face shalt one day see ;
I come to choose the gallant men
Who to-morrow ride with me !"

XI.

I cried (and from my forehead
The drops of anguish fall) :
"O Rider ! now I know thee well—
Thou who o’ertakest all,

XII.

"Or soon or late :—but that brave man,
Oh, let him ride the plain,
To cheer his troop from battle back,
And lead them forth again !"

XIII.

The horseman sighed for answer :
His charger reared apace ;
Like sea-spray, as he snorted, flashed
The foam-flakes by my face.

XIV.

Then, on a little further,
I heard him say to one,
Who slept the sleep of sweet eighteen :
"Before to-morrow’s sun

XV.

"Sink, with the tide of battle
In scarlet o'er the town,
Meet me in yonder hollow,
When the Cossack charges down."

XVI.

"O spare, at least, that boy!" I cried,
"Life's ride has just begun
For him, so full of life and pride—
His mother's only son!"

XVII.

"A widow she, who liveth
In his letters, week by week;
News flasht along the wires
Of this fight will blanch her cheek

XVIII.

"Through days of anxious watching,
Till she learn the list of slain." . . .
The horseman shook his mournful plume,
The charger tossed his mane.

XIX.

Then to a distant watch-fire,
Where Highlanders stood round,
And one, his head upon his hand,
Sat, thinking, on the ground,

XX.

Wrapt in the plaid of his own hills,
Where now his thoughts are flown.
The horseman turned his mailèd hand,
And spake in hollow tone :

XXI.

"When the rushing tide of bayonets
Breaks crested up yon height,
And wide-mouthed cannon thunder down
Their welcomes left and right,

XXII.

"I wait thee by the shallow ford,
When cheering on thy men ;
Flash all the waters round thine eyes,—
Up to my saddle then !

XXIII.

"And we will ride to a quiet place" . . .
"Ah, cruel !" I burst forth,
"That fallen Highlander will leave
Wide blank in the far north !

XXIV.

"Seest thou, in that peaceful home,
A fair and patient wife,
Teaching three children, at her knee,
To pray for 'father's life ?'

XXV.

"Hast thou no pity?" . . . Tow'rds a tent
That stood apart he turned,
Where paced a sentry, and a lamp
Behind the canvas burned.

XXVI.

The horseman gazed in silence ;
Then, with a heavy sigh,
"Old man," he said, "the time is come
To lay thine armour by.

XXVII.

"Now forty years since first I stood
Over thee, on the plain,
When thou, in charging, wounded fell,
Upon the fields of Spain.

XXVIII.

"And since that time, through years, till thou
A wider fame did'st reach,
Commanding where thy sword first led
Forlorn hopes to the breach.

XXIX.

"My charger's hoofs have often flasht
A stone's-throw from thy head :
And now, at last, thy day is come !"
"Welcome to him !" I said.

XXX.

"To such as he, oh terrible
Dark rider ! through the world,
Thou com'st not ill, upon the wings
Of the rushing battle whirled.

XXXI.

"In such as he, the flame that burned
Through long life to renown,
Is better blown out suddenly,
Than flickering slowly down

XXXII.

"In a leaden socket, day by day ;
Fitter for all such ones,
Their veteran souls should march away,
To the music of the guns.

XXXIII.

"Tribute of reverential tears
Be paid them when they fall ;
But oh ! from these, far spent upon
Life's journey, choose thou all

XXXIV.

"Who ride to-morrow out of sight,
In mist—whate'er their worth—
Spare us the flower of our youth,
With such strong roots on earth !

XXXV.

"Spare us" . . . Then sudden rang a blast
The glimmering white tents through ;
And down them faded, as I gazed,
The Horseman from my view.

XXXVI.

I started—from a feverish sleep,
The dawn was breaking grey ;
The shrill reveille roused the camp
To life, once more, that day.



VOISIN ET VOISINE.

I.

LA matinée est belle,
 Au dessus des lilas
 La première hirondelle
 Plonge dans l'air là bas.
 Si je regarde à travers toits, peut-être
 Je verrai ma voisine, à sa fenêtre.
 Je l'aperçois Dans le ciel du matin
 Je vois briller son front pur et mutin.
 "Bonjour ! Le Printemps est veau, ma chère !
 N'irons nous pas tous les deux
 Au pays des amoureux ?"
 "Pour m'en aller si loin j'ai trop à faire.
 Quand j'aurai fini mon travail, ce soir
 J'écouterai mon voisin, au revoir !"

II.

Le soir, de ma fenêtre
 Je guette, à mon retour.
 Ma belle va paraître
 Avant la fin du jour.
 Oh, si j'étais l'hirondelle qui passe,
 J'aurais déjà cent fois franchi l'espace

Mais la voilà, qui se coiffe au miroir
En face, et qui feint de ne pas me voir !

“ Bonsoir, voisine, . . . Oh ! que la nuit est belle !

N’irons nous pas tous les deux

Au pays des amoureux ? ”

“ Pour marcher la nuit, c’est trop loin, ” dit elle.

“ Et je suis bien lasse . . . il est tard ce soir . . .

Demain, peut-être . . . Voisin, au revoir ! ”

Sept., 1879.

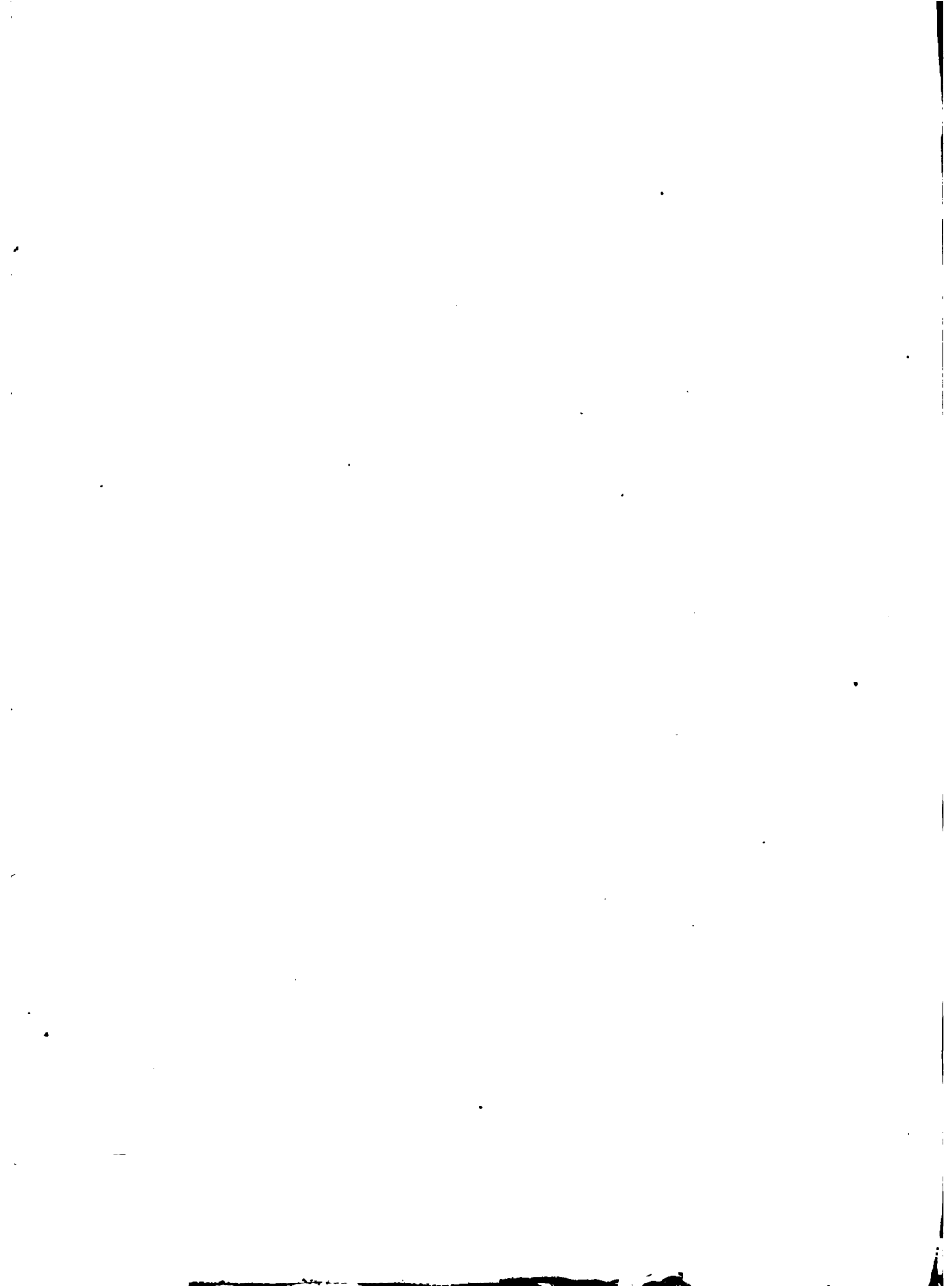






MISCELLANEOUS.





A ROMAN TOMB.

ONE starlit night, upon the Appian way
 I stood, amongst the tombs of ancient Rome,
 The nameless monuments of men who lay
 Gathered to their last home.

Mighty in life, haply they here had raised
 Stones that should tell, when they were under-
 ground,
 Of the great names that flatterers had praised,
 And Poets' lays had crowned.

Ambition, Pride, all sensual delights
 That bind the soul in leaden chains to earth,
 Once filled the measure of their days and nights—
 • What lives to show their worth?

How much to rouse our sympathy and love,
 In what is left of those world-famous men,
 The conquerors in the field, or they who strove
 To conquer with the pen?

What but the stinging verse of satires bought
 And sold, to flay a friend with fatal ease?
 The cirque, where men were slain by beasts for sport:
 What monuments but these?

What, in the name of all their gods of stone,
But polished plinths of temples raised to lust,
Triumphal arch or portico o'erthrown?
Dust back again to dust!

In every form, self-worship and self-love;
Passions in marble deified with grace;
The cultured arts, like fruitage, carved above
A quickly-crumbled base.

The spirit fled—the informing fire is cold.
And herein lies the difference between
The ruin of the things that we behold,
And of the things unseen.

While the rude stones up-built by peasant hands
Mark where the shattered cross once held control,
The spirit there, Time's cruel scythe withstands,—
Soul answers still to soul.

But not so here. I said: when through the gloom
(Cold horror seized and held me there, I wist),
Methought the headless Roman on his tomb,
Moved in the moonlight mist.

The arm was slowly raised wherewith he held
His toga's folds; and in the very place
Where the stone head erst stood, I now beheld
A pale, stern Roman face.

Then from those lips, as when a night-wind grows
Among the reeds on Thrasimene's cold lake,
In Latin tongue, a hollow voice arose,
And murmuring hoarsely spake.

"Mortal, now twice ten hundred years are past,
Com'st thou to vex the ashes in my urn,
With all thy vain and shallow wisdom, cast
On the great names that burn

"In the world's temple, like fed-lamps of old?
Let none, presumptuous, dare to quench the light,
Because the growing centuries behold
The dawn succeed to night.

"The dawn; not yet the day! The vapours curled
But slowly rise; and ignorance's cloud
Which the All-wise hath laid upon His world,
Doth half mankind enshroud.

"And He whom blindly we adored as Jove,
O thou vain Mortal, was it not His will
That knowledge feebly scales the stair above,
Higher and higher still?

"We found the world barbarian: is it nought,
That where we trod, arts sprang beneath our feet?
The tales of virtue and of valour wrought,
Your children still repeat.

" Who framed just laws, to govern Kings and crafts ?
Who made the streams from hill to hill to flow ?
Through Europe's heart who drove the roads, like
shafts

Shot from a mighty bow ?

" The fierceness, wolf-imbibed, of all our race,
Made half the world the Roman Eagle's home.
From Greeks, we borrowed poetry and grace, —
Our arms belonged to Rome !

" And if the antique virtue ceased to shine,
In days when I had long been out of sight,
Did Rome but share the natural decline
Of all things at their height ?

" For peace is kin to luxury : they sank
By slow degrees, those latter men, supine,
Rose-garlanded, inglorious, as they drank
The red Falernian wine,

" Cool from their grottos by the tideless sea,
Where mantled round with pine and olive wood,
With gardens, baths, and fishponds fair to see,
Their stately villas stood.

" Feasting on Lucrine oysters, or the fruit
Of many a distant sea, while boys in praise
Of love, their voices mingled with the lute,
In soft emasculate lays.

"Not such our lives ! We fed, in days of old,
With less refinement, and had rougher games ;
Our sterner measures, Saturnine and bold,
Had nobler, worthier aims.

"We sang the God-like hero in his urn ;
We crowned the living Victory with bays ;
We worshipped Mars ; and Justice, blind and stern,
Sat in our open ways.

"To prove the public virtues in this life,
Stands not the Ædile's tomb unto this hour ?
And, as a monument to wedded wife,
Behold Metella's tower !

"The Vineyard, where the Scipios' ashes lie,
And linked with them, that motherhood, whose
name,
While Gracchus is remembered, shall not die,
Old Roman worth proclaim.

"And there are memories, greater e'en than these,
Embalmed in History, their graves unknown ;
While soon or late, Time's ruthless hand doth seize
The perishable stone.

"The stone that mocks for some few hundred years
The honoured relics, gathered 'neath that tomb,
Raised by a loving hand, with pious tears,
Over—ye know not whom !

"Such lot is mine. A lucky flight of birds
Presaged my birth : my life was crowned with fame,
Men in the forum ever met my words
With reverent acclaim.

"They made me Prætor : placed on high my bust;
And when for ever I had passed away,
The city trailed their garments in the dust,
With covered heads that day.

"They bare my ashes here : the Senate raised
This sculptured marble, which hath long survived
The recollection of the man it praised,
—A memory so short-lived !

"Why doth it cumber still the ground ?" And here
The hollow voice grew tremulous with scorn.
"To point a moral, obvious and clear,
To ages yet unborn ?

"*That builded tombs, and all the strong desire
To be remembered after death is vain.*
The centres of small systems that expire
With us, our souls sustain

"The conscious loss of all that pride believed
Should keep us living through the future years :
We learn, O Mortal, how we were deceived,
When the hot bitter tears

"Shed by those few whose lives were bound with ours,
Or wife's or freedman's—(since we only know
In death what depth of root have Love's fair flowers)—
When these have ceased to flow,

"Oblivion quickly gathers round our lives :
The spade may strike some urn that tells of Fame,
But of the struggle of that life survives
Naught save an empty name !

"Our Race is passed away. At dead of night
The Master called us ; and we did His will.
Ye, who through widening avenues of light
Are gathering knowledge still,

"Who, to the Past's accumulated wealth,
Add, day by day, fresh stores that inward roll,
The large experience that bringeth health
And wisdom to the soul,

"Learn yet one thing. He who is wise above,
Leadeth in every age His children home ;
And He, beholding, something found to love,
Even in Pagan Rome."



MOUNTAINS.

O MOUNTAINS ! inaccessible, nigh Heaven,
 We gaze in wonder,
 Hearing your deep mysterious answers given
 To God's voice, Thunder.

Ye seem to hold communion with the Immortal :
 First on your summit,
 The fiery steeds, let loose from Heaven's portal,
 Strive to o'ercome it.

And while in impotent wrath they split the pine roots,
 And downwards hunt them,
 Tearing up valleys where the tender vine shoots,
 Unmoved, ye front them.

Unmoved, regard the tongue of fire that splinters
 Forests beneath ye ;
 Your crowns, impearled with snow of countless winters,
 Still proudly wreath ye.

Ye drink the sunshine in your morning revels
 While we are sleeping,
 And stars invisible at lower levels,
 Their vigils keeping,

In nebulous depths of blue, to your keen focus,
Are ever patent ;
Yet know ye, Mountains, more than the gold crocus
At your feet latent ?

Have ye the knowledge of a Power sustaining,
More deep and serious,
Than thrills throughout its delicate gold veining,
With sense mysterious ?

Wist ye what mighty Arm, O Rocks ! have driven
Those snow-flakes o'er ye ?
When, to their base, surrounding hills were riven,
What hands up-bore ye ?

Have ye more knowledge of the Love that showers
Its dew caressing,
Than the small weeds that lift their thankful flowers
To drink the blessing ?

Image of intellectual power, the glory
Of Man's endeavour,
In your great solitudes, O Mountains hoary,
Are ye for ever !

Breathing an atmosphere of rarer essence,
The ages show them,
Sending the shadow of their mighty presence
On all below them.

And in those heights where soars the eagle only,
From our eyes clouded,
The pride of human intellect dwells lonely,
With mists enshrouded.

Striving to reach that yet unfathomed power,
Insight not given—
What fuller knowledge than the humblest flower
Has it of Heaven?

Of that great Love pervading all creation,
Uncomprehended?
The subtle problem of our destination,
When life is ended?

Knowledge of "Power and Glory" never ending
To whom is given?
Are not the heights and depths of understanding
Herein made even?

The lessons, these, O Mountains, that ye teach
If men receive them;
The loftiest human intellect cannot reach
The low—believe them!



THE RIVER OF MY DREAM.

METHOUGHT I stood beside a city's River,
 That like an arrow through its bosom shot
 Black with the poisoned tide of sins for ever,
 Salt with the tears of sorrow long forgot.

What human burthens underneath lay buried?
 I watched the crowd of swimmers struggling there ;
 And while the dark Stream never stayed nor hurried,
 It closed each instant o'er some life-despair.

Silently closed ;—but ere the circling eddy
 Had widened full its rings, to fill the place,
 Another form was striking out already,
 Till the Stream clasped him in its black embrace.

And prayers, and curses, and a wail for ever,
 Swept, like a wind, beneath the arches dim ;
 Souls battling on, each with his small endeavour,
 Each to the separate goal foredoomed for him !

All men,—all ages,—young and very old,
 The sad, the wicked, and the innocent,
 Some sank beneath their cherished weight of gold,
 Some 'neath a weight of human learning bent.

First came the children, with their day-break eyes
Wide set, that went resistless down the stream,
Their tiny fingers catching at the flies
And water-lilies. 'Twas a summer's dream

For them, the rushing of the waters now!
Till one, the brightest, loveliest, most brave,
Dropped all his starry treasures, and his brow
Circled in glory, sank beneath the wave.

An anguished mother with despairing gesture
Reached after him—in vain! . . . Yet happier they
Who sink serenely thus, in spotless vesture,
Before the burthen and the heat of day!

Yes! happier far than *those*—once dearly prized,
The faded shapes of what were erst so fair,
And flattered,—now forgotten and despised,
With bloodless lips, and wild entangled hair,

Who cried for help, and up the oozy bank
Clutched at the weeds—then sliding backwards, fell;
—Others, more happy, landed there, and sank
Among the flowery fields of asphodel:

Lapt in luxurious dreams, of powerless will
To breast the current; letting the gold sand
Of Life slip through their languid fingers still,
They lay, forgetful of the promised Land!

Forgetful that the roaring water-course
Is Man's inheritance ; that only he
Shall win that Land, whose firm persistent force
Cleaves on, with stroke unwearied, to the sea.

And lo! beside them and the rushing River
Were bleaching skeletons, whose life-decay,
Without one action towards the great "For Ever,"
Had crumbled slowly into dust away.

Thus crumbled now these idle lives of fashion,
While earnest swimmers in the heat and strife,
Through swiftest currents of fierce human passion,
Were struggling onwards to the Better Life.

Sometimes they sank, amid the foaming water :—
But even thus, methought, O ! better far,
To fall, like men, o'ercome in human slaughter,
Than coldly gaze, like statues, from afar.

And some my straining eyesight followed keenly,
The heroes,—nameless though in life they be,
Floating in evening's golden light serenely
Down to the marge of an unfathomed sea.

Further I saw not ; but the sunbeams quiver
On that extremest margin ! and I knew,
The stains and sorrows of the Human River,
No more were seen in the Eternal blue !

THE THREE MAIDENS.

I SAW three Maidens, sitting in a wood.
 A thorn, a Judas-tree, and laurel, green
 With never-dying hope, spread their dark shade
 Over them, and a runnel at their feet
 Laughed over pebbles, and a sand that gleamed
 Like silver, where the sun, 'thwart the black boughs,
 Smote it. Of these, one wore a vermeil robe,
 With creamy points of Venice lace, and knots
 Of pearl, that matched her sanguine cheek, clear eyes,
 Clear brow, red lips, and crisply-golden hair :
 And on her wrist, she bore a falcon, fain
 To soar and swoop on all the singing-birds
 Around ; only her hand held tight the jess,
 And smoothed the feathers of the warlike bird.
 The next, in yellow ; pale, with dusky braids
 Slipt from their net ; and in her hand a flower
 Of Nightshade ; motionless, a bitter smile
 Upon her lip. The third, from head to foot
 White-robed ; a star-shaped blossom on her breast,
 And in her hand a mandolin, whereon
 Her fingers swept a tune, like wind, at times ;
 At others, dipping a blue jar that stood
 By her, she drew the crystal up that flowed
 Over the pebbles and the silver sand.
 Yet none, I marked, drank of it—only she.

Then spake the first. "My Knight is far away ;
Gone to the Wars ; he would not bide with me,
Loving to hurl his blows about, and win
Fame, better than to lay his head upon
A woman's lap, through the long summer-days. . . .
Why should I weep ? I cannot bind him fast,
Like you, my gallant bird. I should not love
My Knight without his honour ; and that grows
Only in tented fields, with peril plucked. . . .
And yet, if any ill, or hurt, befell
Him, so that he should not return, what good
Were my life unto me ? For all I have
Belongs to him ; and out of him, have I
Nor Hope, nor Faith, upon this earth, nor yet
Beyond the grave, where they shall carry him."

The second laughed : " My Knight is far away.
A woman took him from me with her wiles,
Deadly as poison in the flower I hold ;
And now he lies, drowned in her arms, and deaf
To plighted love, true honour, knightly faith ! . . .
Why should I weep ? I hold all men alike ;
War hath made false *your* Knight, a woman, mine.
I smile,—recalling every oath he swore
To love me, only me—that twilight-time
We stood among the vineyards, he and I :
'Tis such a jest, this phantasy called Love !
Neither in this world, nor the next, shall I
Behold his face,—yet would I give my life
To meet *her* here, alone, one moonless hour,
In the dark wood—so should I die content !"

Then spake the third: "My Knight is far away :
Yet know I neither fear, nor jealous wrath ;
For he is safe from earthly evils now.
Him can no arrow from an arbalist
In the hot noon of life smite down ; no face
Of a strange woman send its shadow 'twixt
His heart and mine. He is in Paradise,
And we shall meet there, by and by, I know ;
For in the garden is a place for me,
Which he is keeping ; if I drink, through life,
Of this pure stream, the water of true Faith,
And hold my heart unspotted from the world."

And she whose Knight lay dead, I held to be
Blest even now—and happiest of the three.



THE PORTRAIT CLASPED IN SILVER.

THE white-faced moon looked out
From the riven clouds of night,
And beheld two figures struggling
In fierce and deadly fight.

The dark was dowered with beauty,
The fair was nobly born ;
In the face of the one was hatred,
In the face of the other, scorn.

Both men were tall, broad-chested,
And lithe of limb, and sound ;
And like bands of knotted iron,
Their arms were together wound.

Till in that mortal wrestle,
From the neck of the fair man fell
A portrait, clasped in silver,
The dark man knew full well.

With a ghastly smile he snatched it
And then his right hand felt
For a poniard's handle, which he plucked
From out of his rival's belt.

But the scornful eyes of the other
 Heeded nor weapon nor clasp,
 As his naked fingers grappled
 That throat in their deadly grasp !

The white-faced moon looked out
 From the riven clouds of night,
 And beheld the two men tottering
 On the brink of a dizzy height.

The fair man's fingers tightened,
 Till the dark eyes started wide ;
 But the dark man drove his poniard
 Home in the fair man's side.

One slip in the blood-stained heather,—
 One cry of a sharp despair,—
 Then over they rolled, and over,
 Down the face of the sea-cliff bare !

One splash in the foaming water,—
 One sweep of the wave—and then
 The secret of love and hatred
 Was safe from the ears of men !

The white-faced moon gazed out
 From the riven clouds of night,
 And the portrait clasped in silver,
 Lay there on the rocky height.

THE DESERTED VILLA.

A DEWY morn with sunlight on the hills ;
 Bees humming everywhere through thyme
 and sage ;

Her white mule in the stable ; and the cage
 Of singing linnets on the window-sill.
 Awake ; . . . He sees the chamber door ajar.—
 “Where is my Beatrice, my morning star ?

“Where does she linger, who was wont to rise
 With bird and flower ?” He pushes back the door :

Her veil is gone, her missal on the floor.
 He calls, and calls again—no voice replies.
 Through all the empty rooms his footsteps stray
 Hour after hour. Noon burns itself away.

The dead still heat of noon, when nothing stirs
 Save shrill cicalas through the grass ; a thread
 Of water in the dried-up river's bed,
 A cloud of road-dust 'twixt the vines and firs.
 He stares, in vain, along that road's white band,
 Crushing the o'er-head jasmines with his hand.

Then golden sunset dripping down through boughs,
 And wide-horned oxen lowing to their rest,
 Blue shadows creeping up the soft hill's breast,
 And lemon-odours wafted round the house :

But human voice and footfall silent both—
He kicks aside the spaniel with an oath !

And round and round the house, all through the night,
The moon his profile on the wall defines,
Angry and black in passionate bold lines.
Morn breaks. The dream is over, wild and bright ;
The wrong, the jealous tyranny—all flown !
The dreamer wakes, to find himself alone.

Nor ever more did she return. Still stands
The gate a-rusted with the wind and rain,
Fig and pomegranate choke the window-pane,
The mule and linnets passed to other hands !
O'ergrown the garden all, with long rank grass—
You see it from the high road as you pass.



AN EVENING'S WALK. ALBANO.

I.

DOWN on the sunset-ledge, one heron veers
Towards the green-blue lake,
Fluffing along its surface, where the spears
Of flags and rushes shake.

II.

The heats and fiery winds have died their death,
In silence calm and deep,
As in hot passion, angry gusts of breath
Are hushed to gradual sleep.

III.

'Neath Palazzola's monastery wall,
Franciscan monks we see,
Sitting beneath their thick-leaved laurels tall,
Idle as boys might be.

IV.

How strange that active men can think that ease
With "aves" marked, is blest !
That only prayer and meditation please
A God who knows no rest !

V.

We wander on, until the silver leaves
The sea that sunset lies on,
And the sharp outline of Soracte cleaves
The golden-grey horizon.

VI.

In its cold shadow sleeps the lake, one side
The height whereon we stand :
The other, Rome's campagna, stretching wide
Its sunburnt wrinkled hand.

VII.

St. Peter's dome, with campaniles girt,
Far as may reach the eye,
Hangs, like a burnisht drop, upon the skirt
Of the clear opal sky.

VIII.

Then, from Gandolfo's castle of the Popes
We turn our steps, adown
Through Barberini's terraces and slopes,
Back to Albano's town.



SONNET.

AS one who, walking on a summer day
'Neath branching trees, afar from the noon glare,
Seeth no sun, but noteth, here and there,
A beam that makes the flickering foliage gay :
So I, whose footsteps far from thee must stray,
Down thickset paths, where the sun-sparkling air,
That lent such colour to life's common grey
Is overshadowed,—suddenly am 'ware
Of a gleam lightening all my forward way ;
When, through the lapse of distance, falls a word
Radiant and cheering, and my heart is stirred
By the quick influence of that warm ray.
Let it shine oft : since, like a caged bird,
My heart sings only, when the sunbeams play.



AN APOLOGUE.

THREE Pilgrims once from Palestine were landed
 Upon an island in the main storm-tost.
 They, craving refuge, came not empty handed,
 But in return, gave all they had not lost.
 One planted firm his cross upon the granite ;
 One dropt his anchor deep from shifting sands ;
 And one, a heart so large he scarce could span it,
 Charged with men's sorrows, bore with loving hands.
 Straight from the tomb of their dear Lord and Master
 Those precious gifts, amid the storm and strife,
 Fearing with them no shipwreck, no disaster,
 They brought, to sweeten and ennoble life.
 The first was Faith, with large eyes ever growing
 More bright, the longer that they lifted be.
 The second Hope, about whose feet was flowing
 A tide that bore bright things from far at sea.
 The third was Charity, that well-belovèd one,
 Who heals all wounds with his sweet tender lips,
 And for the thorn, where'er he has removed one
 Lays light a roseleaf with his finger-tips.
 Faith, Hope, and Charity. If all else perish,
 Grasp what we may of each, with eager hand,
 Happy is he, who those three gifts can cherish,
 Brought by the Pilgrims from the Holy Land !

TWO MISTRESSES.

SHE wore a yellow gown, with filagrees ;
 I watched her swarthy cheek, that sudden flushed
 And sudden, ghastly deadened, with the thrust
 His rapier-wit sent through her, to the lees

Of her heart's blood. He strokes his beard, and twirls
 His pourpoint's tassel, as he turns to speak
 To a ripe beauty, with a Rubens cheek,
 And large white bosom overlaid with pearls,

Seated beside him on the flowery green,
 Who whispers in his ear some amorous staves,
 And through gold rivers of whose hair he laves
 His fingers, laughing at the other's spleen.

* * * *

In the first grey of dawn, a figure stands,
 And draws aside the damask of his bed . . .
 Then to the fountain with a stealthy tread.—
 The fishes sickened where she washed her hands.



POPPIES.

"On one side is a field of drooping oats,
Through which the poppies show their scarlet coats,
So pert and useless, that they call to mind
The scarlet coats that pester human kind."—KEATS.

NOTHING is useless. Do not scorn
These poppies of the field :
Who thinks a space will not despise
Their blushful cheeks and downcast eyes,
Remembering all they yield.

The life-blood of the golden land,
They greet the passer by :
Flushing, with ev'ry wind that's born,
The heaving bosom of the corn,
Under the summer sky.

Ah ! fitting is it ye should grow
Beside the "staff of life,"—
The one our strength from day to day,
The other a pow'r to smooth away
All human care and strife !

When on some fevered bed, perchance,
The corn will not avail,

Nor wine, nor any potions deep,
To call one little hour of sleep
Over the eyelids pale;

'Tis then those "useless scarlet coats"
(Like some of human kind)
Prove their strong hearts can soothe distress,
For all they wear a gaudy dress,
That flutters in the wind.

Their sun-dried leaves have not in vain
Outlived the harvest-day,
If life has gained one hour of peace—
If troubles for a moment cease—
Under the Poppy's sway.



A DREAM OF PARADISE.

A VISION rose before my eyes,
 As I sat musing on this life,
 (Its good and ill, its joy and strife,)
 Of what should be in Paradise.

I saw two souls that, until then,
 Had been divided ; hand in hand,
 In golden day at last they stand,
 Clear from the doubts of scornful men.

They look into each other's eyes,
 With sense of perfect peace at last,
 Made dearer for Life's sorrows past,—
 Thus shall it be in Paradise.

Where fruit and flower together grow,
 Where all is ripe, and no decay,
 Where the birds warble through the day,
 And singingly the waters flow.

Where good that here hath feebly blown
 Shall, 'neath that sun, expand its leaves,
 And Angels bind it into sheaves,
 The evil withering, unknown.

For Love, that lights men up to Heaven,
Love, is the sun that rules that day,
In whose name tears are wiped away,
In whose name all sins are forgiven.

The vision this, before my eyes ;
The reign of what on earth was good ;
Where nothing is misunderstood,—
Thus shall it be in Paradise.



LOVE IS OUT OF TOWN.

I.

I WALKED this morning through the silent square,
 And looked up at the house I love so well,
 Two cats crept through the area-railing there,
 The milkman passed, and did not ring the bell.
 The frail policeman gave no side-glance down.
 He passed as I did—Love is out of Town!

II.

All the dear windows of that house are dark,
 The door is bolted, and her pug is still.
 No chimney's smoke tells of a human spark
 To light and feed a fire. Upon the sill
 Lobelias sown in May look sere and brown:
 —All things declare that Love is out of Town!



IN THE HOF-GARTEN.

A FRAGMENT FROM A PLAY.

Baron.

I AM from Würzburg, her old home, you know,
 And being here, would fain behold her face,
 Gracious as summer-rain to dry old hearts
 Like mine! But in an hour, the Prince's audience done,
 We ride, from hence, for Ratisbon. I fear
 Mine eyes shall not be gladdened, Count Rudolf,
 With sight of your young Duchess?

Count Rudolf.

She was here

A minute since. . . . The musk of velvet robes
 Clings yet, methinks, along this colonnade. . . .
 That fallen rose-leaf on the marble step
 Marks where she passed—yes; look you! there she
 stands
 Leaning against the balustrade.

Baron.

So—so—

She looks less bright, methinks. . . . Time works that
 change. . . .

(Two years come Martinmass, since she was wed?)
 But fairer, fuller blown, and statelier,
 Becoming station and apparel. . . . Who
 Are they who stand aloof, and yet so near?
 Wanting, methinks, in courtliness, to leave
 Their Duchess thus.

Count. It is the Duke himself,
With Countess Arnheim.

Baron. Ha ! the Duke himself ?
A likely-looking man, well-limbed, erect :
Yet time to *him*, perhaps, might something add
Of mental vigour. . . . Eh ? The face is weak ;
Drawn with too soft a brush—but he is young—
Who is this Countess Arnheim ?

Count. If you mean
Her birth, 'tis dubious: her rank, you hear :
Her wit, her talent, is the talk of all
Since she appeared at Court.

Baron. Humph ! how long since ?
Her wit, like Charity, hath much to hide.
She is ill-favoured.

Count. Wait till you have speech
With her. Not three months is it since she came,
And yet already half the men are mad
About her.

Baron. Doth the Duchess much affect
Her company ?

Count. Well . . . Yes . . . I scarce can say . . .
I think so. She diverts the Duke's dull hours,
Hath a sweet trick of singing—nay, of late,
I note that in the fashion of her coif
And farthingale, the Duchess copies all
That Countess Arnheim wears.

Baron (after a pause). Tell me, my friend—
Though now I push my question to the verge
Of indiscretion—Is the Duchess held
A happy woman ? Happy, as the wife

Of some poor peasant is, upon a rood
Of land, whose wishes never further stray ?

Count. Nay, Baron, was it not a marriage made,
As royal marriages so seldom are—
Firstly, for love, and only afterwards
Approved of by the State? Rarely is lot
So blest in sov'reign station as should be
That of our Duke and Duchess.

Baron. You evade
The question, ne'ertheless. Not what *should* be,
But what *is*, I desire to know. She looks
Like one in whom the light of youth hath died
Out suddenly.

Count. I hope not so.

Baron. Confess,
Do you not mark a difference, since first
She came? Think! only twenty-two! 'Tis soon
To wear that listless, court-begotten air!

Count. Baron, you drive me hard. . . . I live at
Court,
And should *not* see, that which were best unseen . . .
There *is* a change, I cannot but deplore,
Noting no element from her life withdrawn—
No shock of fate—no sudden grief to cause
The alteration. But from Nature's face
We learn how trifles imperceptible
Have large result. . . . Between yon sycamores,
Look at the lake there. Scarce a minute since,
It bore the perfect image of the sky,
Upon its bosom: every golden moss
Along its bank, and lichen's pale-green hair

On the down-bending branch was mirrored clear :
And now—the change ! A breath of air—a drift
Of fleecy vapour o'er the blue,—no more,
And lo ! the lake's untroubled sympathy
With the bright day above, is gone. A cold
Grey ripple, like an empty laughter, breaks
The tranquil trust wherein it lay, and smiled. . . .
Such change there is in the young Duchess.

Baron. Doth

Your parable imply that o'er the face
Of what was once her Heaven,—a husband's love,—
A cloud hath blown already ?

Count. God forbid !

I think,—nay, I am sure, the Duke *doth* love
His wife : but women sometimes entertain
Hopes of eternal honeymoons, which few
Have ever realized. It may be this :
It may be that the Duke, like many men,
In the security of "home" and "wife,"
Finds peace indeed, yet still unsatisfied,
That lack of something to excite and stir
The sluggish blood, at Court (our wars being done),
Where men must needs spend stratagem on chess,
And try their strength on tennis, or at ball !

Baron. And waste their wit on women,—*not their wives.*

I understand. The drift of your remark
Touches me nearly. I had rather see
This brodered Duchess back again, a girl
Stepping to Mass in modest stuffs, beside
Her aged mother (the Princess, you know,

Was fall'n from royal fortunes when the Duke
First met her daughter)—I had rather see
Her back, I say, in Würzburg,—exiled—poor,
But where each burgher blessed her, like the sun,
For shining on him, as she passed,—than here,
More lonely far, in all the gold brocades
Of court, where riot is so loud, that hearts,
Though side by side, hear not each other beat !
As to your *Countess Arnheims*,—one and all,
They should be——

Count. ——Baron ! not alone the walls
But trees and flowers have ears ! 'Tis dangerous
To breathe with disrespect a lady's name.
We are at Court ! But you, on your return,
If you should speak of us, bear this in mind ;
The Duchess, being a woman, hath her share
Of thorns and roses : being a good one, she
Will try and put the thorns aside, in time ;
Taking the roses only to her heart. . . .
They come this way—'twere well that we retire.



TWO VIEWS OF A CHARACTER.

Herbert.

HE is a hypocrite

Max.

I think it not—

I do believe that you misjudge him, taking
Your side-view of the man to be the whole
Completed truth : just so; a mountain shows
One aspect to the North, one to the South ;
Jagged and peaked to one, and to the other
All curves and slopes. The man is many-sided,
Not false, I say.

Herbert.

Pah ! doesn't he sing psalms,
And pass with half the women for a Saint,
And talk his vaporous sentiment, the while
He's no whit better than his neighbours, Max ?
If that's not *cant*, forgive me ! Don't wash in
The sky of your celestial charity,
Old Boy, so thick that every edge is lost
And outline blurred.

Max.

Herbert, the real sky
Lights all, and colours, softening all the lines ;
Remember this. If our weak copy strives
To blend and reconcile in our finite view
Of others what seems faulty, let us take
Revenge in clear sharp sunlight on ourselves
In the known foreground. Think how oft our
thoughts—

Our secret thoughts, if not our open acts—
To-day give lie to yesterdays and to-morrows !
Of all the seed the Sower dropped, what fell
By the road-side, I think, fell thickest. Birds
I' the air for ever hover round us, eager
To snatch the good seed as it falls. And if
The lower nature of this man forswears
At times the nobler part, as I believe,
He is but human. Peter thrice denied
His Master ; and God's chosen Shepherd-King
Was stained with shameful sin. Yet none, I think,
Hold these for hypocrites.

Herbert.

Now you confound

Two things—or else you are a Jesuit, Max.
An upright man may fall, being tempted—well,
None know their strength, alas ! but far from this,
Are the habitual double-lives that, like
Panels we wot of, painted for the world
With Godly Saints, show, when reversed, a lewd
And devilish riot.

Max (after a pause). There are such, I know ;
But oftener, far oftener, I believe,
Do lives resemble pictures that we judge
Not as complete, but in their several parts ;
Saying, "Well done !" to this—turning our eyes
From that uncared-for corner—finding them
But inconsistent, ill-accomplished wholes,
Yet not all worthless. . . . Ah ! Believe me, Truth
To our own hearts is rarer than to men,
So much the larger part of self lies hid
From all save God.

WINFRED'S HAIR.

WINFRED, waking in the morning,
 Locks dishevelled, sighed, "Alas !
 Broken is the Venice-bodkin
 That you gave me—'twas of glass.
 All my auburn hair, henceforward,
 Shall be given to the wind."
 —Ere the evening came, another's
 Net of pearls her hair confined.

Fragile as the Venice-bauble
 I had thrust in Winfred's hair,
 Soon the pearl-net snapped asunder
 Other hands had fastened there ;
 Ere the moon's wide-blossomed petals
 On the breast of night had died,
 (Net and bodkin both discarded,)
 Winfred's glittering hair flowed wide !

Silver comb and silken fillet
 Next, in turn, the wild hair bound,
 Till, at length, the crown of wifehood
 Clasped itself that hair around.
 Golden crown of Love ! displacing
 Girlhood's vain adornments there ;
 Winfred never more shall alter,
 Now, the fashion of her hair.

A SCANDINAVIAN LEGEND.

A LITTLE water-spirit all day long
 Sat singing on the stream. The fisher heard
 And smiled to hear that sweet voice, as it stirred
 The reeds and rushes with its trustful song.
 "I hope, O I hope," that burthen ever grew,
 "That the Redeemer of mankind will save *me* too!"

A stern, hard priest who rode along that way,
 Wrapt in a mantle of self-righteous zeal,
 Felt his wrath kindle at the soft appeal,
 That formed the burthen of that trustful lay.
 "I hope, O I hope," burst from those lips anew,
 "That the Redeemer of mankind will save *me* too!"

There sat the little Spirit on the wave,
 As the priest turning on his saddle, cried,
 "Cease, cease that clamour, the Redeemer died
 The souls of men—not such as thee—to save.
 As soon shall blossoms this bare twig unfold
 As thou, Salvation, impious sprite, behold!"

With that same twig, his lazy mule he smote,
 And the poor Spirit's cry of sharp despair
 At those fell words rang on the silent air,
 As he sank down, too helpless now to float.

But lo! the priest's mule scarce ten paces bore him,
Ere the dry twig burst out in bloom before him!

Struck with remorse and shame, the salt tears ran
Down the hard face of that repentant man;
And turning back, his humbled head he bowed
Before God's throne of grace: then cried aloud,
"See, sinful man, the twig *has* bloomed, to prove
That God's love worketh in no narrow groove!
Thy soul, thou little Spirit, saved shall be—
Pray thou that Christ like mercy show to me."

And all that night, when trembling moonlight wakes
The shadowy water with its silver strings,
The fishers hear the little voice that sings
Louder than ever, till its burthen breaks;
"I hope, yea, I hope—my hope I now renew,
That the Redeemer of mankind will save *me* too."



SYMPATHY.

WE are as Harps, that vibrate to a touch
From stranger hands, unconscious of the strings;
While the soul's slumbering echoes wake to life,
And through its halls responsive music rings.

Few are the Davids to these Harps of ours!
Few learn the cunning of the instrument:
And those to whom the gift has been denied
Are oftenest those with whom our lives are spent.

But God's large gift of Love is showered around.
Let us be thankful. Earth were too like Heaven,
If, with the power of loving deep and long,
That other gift of Sympathy were given!



TO A SIREN.

“O MERMAID, Mermaid, underneath the sea,
 Luring to death the sailors with thy strain,
 The day is gone when thou could'st capture me,
 Pass on: thy music here is spent in vain!”
 —Thus my heart sang when I beheld her face,
 After the lapse of many changeful years,
 And I refused to bow before the grace
 That cost me once so many bitter tears.

“O Mermaid, Mermaid, on thy coral strand
 Lies many a gallant heart for thee who died,
 And no tear dims the mirror in thy hand !
 Pass on—pass on”—in bitterness I cried.
 Time had not touched her beauty: she was gay;
 No pity lingered round her harp's sweet strings;
 And I rejoiced that I had broke away,—
 That now in vain for me the Siren sings.



THEN AND NOW.

HE and I in the twilight,
 I mind it well—ah me!
 His wild despair, the cry of his heart,
 In its hopeless misery.

Crushed as a flower is crushed
 In a shut-down book, his soul,
 That hour, ta'en out of a summer's day,
 Had lost all self-control.

The book was a heavy anguish,
 Closed on a living man:
 We may slowly learn to unclasp the book,—
 Unfold the flower, who can?

Was this the friend I knew,
 Who smiled at love, in scorn?
 And all because that a worthless woman
 Died here yesterday morn!

Yet she no more deceived him,
 With the guile of her pouting kiss.
 God! that such precious oil should be poured
 Into vessel as vile as this!

No—she no more deceived him:
The worth of her soul he had found:
But, as ivy will smother the strongest oak,
Her being round his was wound.

And not when the axe first severed
The roots that had sapped his youth,
Did he break from the coil of that noxious weed—
Did his soul confess the truth.

And this the cry that he uttered,
As he hid his face in the bed,
Where she, with her wealth of golden hair
About her, was lying dead:

“Gone from me! gone for ever!
All prayer in vain—in vain!
And I who would give my hopes of Heaven
To call her back again!

“O, how I loved that woman!
Many and many a night
Have I covered with kisses those little feet,
Clasped in my fingers tight.

“I had no power to hold her
Close enough, as it seemed,
When that head with its gold abundance bowed,
Between my brown arms gleamed.

"I watched her fringed eyelids,
And listened, hour by hour,
As the soft and regular breathing rose
From her mouth's half-open flower.

"The snow lay round our hut, friend,
But *she* never felt the cold,
And now, O God! 'tis in vain my arms
Her icy limbs enfold.

"You point to those Dresden letters,
To the lock of that Saxon's hair,
I do not forget—but forgive—poor child!
—She was mad when we were there.

"She was mad—yet I think she loved me,
When we dwelt by the happy Rhine,—
That autumn among the Styrian lakes—
That spring in the Apennine.

"And now the summer's come round,
In Florence my darling must die;
She was with me but twelve short months; yet here
My Past and my Future lie.

"Why was she taken from me?
Friend, did I ever complain?
I loved her, with all her hundred sins,
As I never can love again.

"Cruel, to her so young—
Cruel, the summons sent;
In all the splendour and heat of youth,
And without the time to repent!

"In darkness, O God! I cry,
Since the light of my life is flown,
Since the woman I loved is dead—take me,
For I cannot walk alone!"

These the passionate words
That broke from his wild despair.
I never saw him again, till ten
Long years had blanched his hair.

But 'tis thus that I recall him
In that twilight, years ago;
Without, earth's darkness gathering round—
Within, heart-ruin and woe.

God willed that out of that ruin
A better man should rise,
In whom the flesh was subjected
To a spirit, pure and wise.

As the cataract over a rapid
Becomes a river of strength,
The current of that mad life flowed calm;
His heart was God's at length.

All the impetuous love
 He had poured, in youth, on the shrine
 Of an earthly Idol now was laid
 At the feet of Love Divine.

As a cup, that in feverish joy
 Is drained on a festal day,
 May be sanctified to contain the Blood
 That washeth all sin away;

As we choose the self-same metal
 To shield our ships, and assail;
 As the same words, uttered for good or for ill,
 For good or for ill prevail;

So with those Human weapons
 Chosen to fight God's fight,
 They are never passionless, luke-warm lives,
 But mighty for wrong, or right.

Perhaps they have sinned and suffered,
 As this man did—I know
 That from men too cold for the Devil to tempt
 Saint Pauls can never grow!

Thus I think, as I look on him,
 Of his heart's long-wasted love,
 And how, through waters of bitterness, God
 Hath drawn that heart above.

I see how men bless his coming,
How they grieve when he departs:
The secret of bruised spirits hath he,
And a balm for wounded hearts.

He cheers all them who suffer,
He lifts all them who fall;
By temptation and sin, long years ago,
He hath sympathy with all.

As I look at him, I repeat
All worketh to God's wise end;
Perhaps without that passionate love,
He had not been here, my friend.

Perhaps he might have been harder,
From a height of untempted strength—
He was Passion's slave for a season,
Is the servant of God, at length!



THE ITALIAN BEGGAR-BOY.

“ A FOREIGN vagabond and his ape,
 Begging the bread away
 From honest English children,
 Who are hard at work all day,—
 You’ll have never a penny of mine, indeed!”
 I heard the good wife say.

I looked and lo! a swarthy child,
 With piteous hollow eyes,
 His monkey was his only friend,
 And almost half his size.
 A vagabond life? Well, so it is,
 And they who work are wise.

And we who preach these saws are wise!
 Jacko in red and gold
 Held up his cap—I blushed to think
 My sixpence would uphold
 In luxury’s lap, the man to whom
 The little child was sold.

And then I questioned him, and learned
 Of the hard and pinching ways
 That young life was acquainted with,
 In its weary tramp, to raise

Enough to pay for a bed and crusts,
From the master of his days :

And how he oft on steps at night
His weary limbs would throw,
Not daring, penniless, to meet
His wage of curse and blow.
Such idleness, 'faith ! is harder work,
Than factory children know !

So friendless, ignorant, debased,
Without a single bond
To raise him, through a human love,
Unto the life beyond—
Almost tempted to seek for rest
In the heart of the first black pond !

I thought how children, mean as he,
For whom some mother strives
To lead them, through the fear of God,
To follow upright lives,
Were blessèd : for through the rankest tares
That grain of good survives.

I thought how he too once lay warm,
In the light of Love divine,
As he hung on his sunburnt mother's breast,
Under a Tuscan vine.
From her grave on the hill, could she now behold
How all light had ceased to shine !

I thought how bad the best of men
Might have been if that light had fled!
"Vagabond lives are loveless ones;
I pity all such," I said.
"In the name of her who bore thee, child,
Here is a loaf of bread."



PLANETS.

THE stars shoot from us as we gaze, and bear
Their little lights from our dark world away ;
The many twinkling pleasures of the day
Fade into night, and leave us all unblest ;
But the great planets burn unchanging there,
And the true glories of our life we wear,
Like jewels on our breast.

Nothing can rob us of them : ours they are,
When God hath said, " Let there be light within,"
And while our earth-lamps fail us, and the din
Of this dark world grows distant in our ears,
We are led onward by our jewel-star,
As Shepherds once were guided from afar,
To the low-cradled promise of past years !



RETROSPECTION.

THE only sorrows that endure are those
 Of our own building ; roof'd in with remorse.
 For loss of friends, of health, of riches, fame,
 Why, look you, Time shall reconcile us all
 To each of these, until we haply grow
 To count each loss, a gain ; but only this,
 The conscious loss of something in ourselves,
 Unseen, but lessening surely day by day,
 (As though a well should feel the water-spring
 Drying up slowly in its heart)—the years
 Do not assuage this ill. Our own old selves
 Down the long avenue of Life we see,
 And the pale phantoms of what might have been
 Lining the road on either side : we mark
 The early promise unfulfill'd ; the corn—
 Some field half-cut, and some unripen'd still ;—
 Our figs and vines unpruned and profitless ;
 The flowers—Ah me !—the flowers that we bound
 In sheaves at morn, have wither'd in mid-day !
 And Hope, and Faith, and Singleness of Heart
 Have dropp'd like those fair petals, one by one,
 Under the world's hot breath. Is it not so ?
 " Turn not thine eyes behind," the preacher saith,
 " Nor long, like Lot's wife, for the things that were."
 If every day were as the smoke that fades,

Leaving no trace behind, this might be so;
But men whose lives are more than gibe and jeer
Feel how each hour is laden with its seed,
And that God marks the harvest. Unto such
Oblivion can never come. To mourn
With manly sorrow for his past, unfits
No earnest man to win his future way.



IN MEMORIAM.

MEN say, when saints are carried to the grave,
 "Rejoice, for they have join'd that heavenly
 throng,

To which in life their faithful spirits gave
 Sure pledges to belong."

I say not so. Salt of the earth are they,
 Lent us to savour life's too bitter food ;—
 To help us forward on the thorny way :—
 —Weep only for the good !

For weaker spirits, wasted in life's wear,
 Be glad, when God hath laid within the ground
 Burthens they were not strong enough to bear.
 —His mercy doth abound !

His mercy doth abound ; for He hath seen,
 And judg'd, by other than our human laws,
 The movements of this intricate machine,—
 —Each hidden physical cause.

By early taint or heritage, have we
 Follow'd, it may be, at the tempter's call.
 Man sees these things as in a glass, but He,
 Our Father knoweth all.

Therefore weep not that this our loved one lies
Deaf to our voice, and colourless, and cold,
That never more shall he unveil his eyes,
Nor his clasp'd hands unfold.

Never, until that day, when, under Heaven,
He and the Judge of men meet face to face;
And all his sins be known,—and be forgiven,
Through His abounding grace !

For that he died repentant of his sins,
Thankful, and humble, with his latest breath,
And that we know the truer life begins,
When this is closed in death.

Let us rejoice then ; he has reach'd his goal ;
For surely he is better hid away,
Where earth's corruption cannot touch the soul,
But only the vile clay :

The clay that held, in sorrow and in strife,
The better part of our beloved, we know ;
God, in His wisdom, cut the thread of life,—
—Yes ! it is better so.



BY THE SEA.

O COME, Love, to the yellow sand,
 Now in the sunny morning weather,
 There heart by heart, and hand in hand,
 The impress of our feet shall stand
 One little hour together.

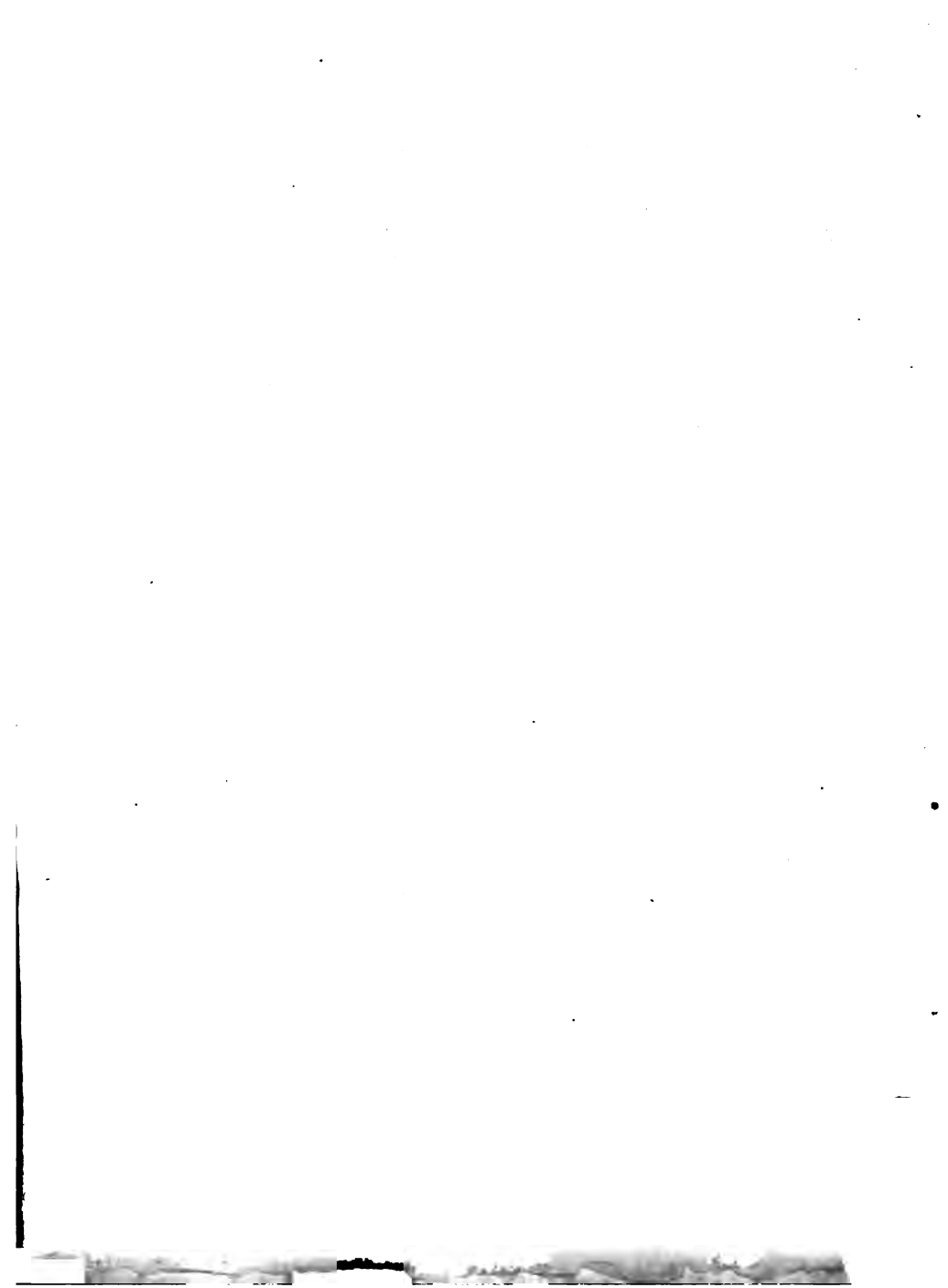
The sea, yon distant bar along,
 Is moaning, like a heart in pain ;
 But rising, as a giant strong,
 Soon shall the burthen of his song
 Break on the shore again.

"Oblivion" is that burthen grand,
 For ages, Love, unchanging still ;
 While reaching out a wrinkled hand,
 He clean effaces from the sand
 Our names,—as Time soon will !

Nor Time nor tide, Love, hath control
 Our hearts this little hour to sever ;
 Tho' waves may rise,—while the years roll,
 Its memory stands within each soul,
 As on a rock,—for ever !

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